

English Degree Entrance Prep

Carrie Molinski & Sue Slessor



ENGLISH DEGREE ENTRANCE PREPARATION

CARRIE MOLINSKI AND SUE SLESSOR



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CONTENTS

Accessing & Using English for Degree Entrance Preparation	1
Accessibility Statement	4
Acknowledgements	vi
Introduction	1

Unit 1: Sentence Skills

Run-on Sentences

Fixing Run-Ons & Comma Splices	5
Commas	16
Applying Coordination Conjunctions	25
Adding Subordinating Conjunctions	30

Parallelism

Parallelism in Writing	37
Parallel Structure	38

Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers	47
Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers: Part 1	54

Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers: Part 2	55
--	----

Person Perspective

Putting the Pieces Together: Pronoun Review	61
Points of View: First, Second, and Third Person video	71
Point of View	72

Punctuation

Basic Punctuation Rules	78
Semicolons	79
Quotes	82
Apostrophes	87

Unit 2: Reading Skills

Reading Strategies

Consider Your Reading Environment	94
Navigating Textbooks	100
Critical Reading Skills	110

Note-Taking Skills

Note-Taking	119
-------------	-----

Reflection

Reflective Writing and Summaries	134
----------------------------------	-----

Unit 3: Writing Skills

Academic Writing

Writing for College	143
---------------------	-----

Georgian Resources & Services	146
-------------------------------	-----

Pre-Writing

Brainstorming Tip Sheet	150
-------------------------	-----

Apply Prewriting Models	152
-------------------------	-----

The Writing Process in 7 Steps	164
--------------------------------	-----

Paragraphs

Developing Paragraphs	167
-----------------------	-----

Descriptive Paragraphs	187
------------------------	-----

Narrative Paragraphs	195
----------------------	-----

Expository Paragraphs	199
-----------------------	-----

Persuasive Paragraphs	208
-----------------------	-----

Essays

Expository Essays	220
The Structure of a Persuasive Essay	225
Narration	228
Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement	232
Organizing Your Writing	241
Writing Body Paragraphs	247
Writing Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs	256

Unit 4: Research Skills

APA Formatting

Why Do We Cite?	270
Integrating Source Evidence into Your Writing	272
APA Title Page Guidelines	281

Finding Credible Sources

Working with Information	285
Exploring Source Types	301
Source Type: Trade Publication Cues	302
Source Type: Journal Article Cues	306
The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources	311
Research help videos	321
Finding and Evaluating Research Sources	322

Paraphrasing & Summarizing

Plagiarism	332
Writing Summaries	334
Paraphrasing	340

Developing Essay Outlines

How to Write an Essay: 4 Minute Step by Step Guide	351
Using Sources to Support Your Writing	352
Research Process: Making Notes, Synthesizing Information, and Keeping a Research Log	371
Annotated Student Sample: Research Log	377
Creating an Outline for an Essay	380
Creating a Rough Draft for a Research Paper	387

Unit 5: Presentation Skills

Presentation Techniques

Designing the Presentation	405
Planning the Presentation	416

Creating Presentations

Giving a Presentation	431
Delivering the Presentation	443
Presentation Aids	454

ACCESSING & USING ENGLISH FOR DEGREE ENTRANCE PREPARATION

Welcome to English for Degree Entrance Preparation

This is an openly accessible (free) textbook available to all students on the web.

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- Unit 1

- Unit 2
- Unit 3
- Unit 4
- Unit 5

Recommendations

- Check for printing costs at a local print shop (Staples, etc.)
- Printing a large document is often significantly less expensive at a print shop than it is to print on your home printer or at the Library
- Consider printing the book in black & white and referring to the web version or the PDF for any information that requires colour
- Ask about binding or 3 hole punching when you order, as this is usually low cost and will make your textbook easier to use

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ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Accessibility features of the web version of this resource

The web version of *English Degree Entrance Preparation* has been designed with accessibility in mind by incorporating the following features:

- It has been optimized for people who use screen-reader technology.
 - all content can be navigated using a keyboard.
 - links, headings and tables are formatted to work with screen readers.
- All images in this guide are described fully in the text, alt-tag or in an image description section for complex images.
- Information is not conveyed by colour alone.
- Pressbooks has built in features such as the ability to change font size.

Other file formats available

In addition to the web version, this book is available in PDF format (whole book and by chapter).

Known accessibility issues and areas for improvement

This book's adapters have attempted to improve upon existing features from the original sources and improve these materials for all users.

While we strive to ensure that this resource is as accessible and usable as possible, we might not always get it right. Any issues we identify will be listed below. If you encounter issues with this text, please notify your professor.

List of Known Accessibility Issues

Location of Issue	Need for Improvement	Timeline	Work Around
APA formatted references (throughout the book)	APA references require the location of resources to be listed as a full URL	Wait for APA update	Reference entry URLs are not “linked” but the full URL is listed in text. Plan to optimize using tagging for next update.
Video Captioning	All videos have accessible CC & transcripts via YouTube or other provider, but may not have transcripts that fully describe non-speech content.		Current provisions meet AODA requirements.
PDF version of book	PDF version of book may not be fully accessible, as it was generated using Pressbooks export.		Text versions of interactive activities added. Work ongoing.

Accessibility standards

The web version of this resource has been designed to meet [AODA requirements](#), along with the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0](#), level AA. In addition, it follows all guidelines in [Appendix A: Checklist for Accessibility](#) of the [Accessibility Toolkit – 2nd Edition](#).

This statement was last updated on August 17, 2023.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This OER, *English Degree Entrance Preparation*, is a collection of resources adapted by **Academic and Career Preparation at Georgian College** to meet the needs of students in Academic and Career Prep. In most sections of this OER, updates have been made to the existing content to improve usability and accessibility, incorporate interactive elements and improve the overall student experience. This collection reuses content from the following key resources:

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INTRODUCTION

The English for Degree Entrance Preparation pressbook is designed to equip students with essential language and communication skills. In this book, you will find a wealth of practical tips, exercises, and examples to reinforce your understanding of sentence skills, reading strategies, writing strategies, research skills, and presentation skills. Students will be equipped with a comprehensive toolkit to excel in the English for Degree Entrance Preparation course, [Academic and Career Preparation, Georgian College](#).

Learners develop a strong foundation in sentence construction using clear, concise, and grammatically correct sentences. The course unlocks the power of reading with strategic approaches to grasp main ideas, draw inferences, and engage with academic articles, literature, and research papers on a deeper level. Students also develop their writing prowess by mastering various academic writing styles and learn the importance of evidence-based writing, proper citation, and organization to convey thoughts effectively. Students acquire essential research skills to find reliable and relevant sources to evaluate sources and synthesize information to incorporate details into their writing. Finally, confidently presenting your ideas is essential in academic and professional settings alike. From organizing content, creating slides, to sharing information, these skills ensure students can deliver a presentation that captivates their audience.

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UNIT 1: SENTENCE SKILLS

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Table of Contents

[Run on Sentences](#)

- [Commas](#)
- [Fixing Run-ons & Comma Splices](#)
- [Applying Coordination Conjunctions](#)
- [Adding Subordination Conjunctions](#)

[Parallelism](#)

- [Parallelism in Writing](#)
- [Parallel Structure](#)

[Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers](#)

- [Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers: Part 1](#)
- [Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers: Part 2](#)

[Punctuation](#)

- [Basic Punctuation Rules](#)
- [Semi-Colons](#)
- [Quotes](#)
- [Apostrophes](#)

Person Perspective

- [Putting the Pieces Together: Pronoun Review](#)
- [Points of View: First, Second, and Third Person video](#)

RUN-ON SENTENCES

Introduction

In this module, you will learn how to identify run-on sentences and comma splices. You will have the opportunity to make corrections avoiding run-on sentences using punctuation, coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.

Learning Objectives

- Review the basics of run-ons and comma splices.
- Identify various fixes for run-ons and comma splices.
- Apply fixes to sentences and paragraphs.

To Do List

- Read “Run on Sentences” in Blackboard.
- Read “Commas” in *Communications Essentials for College*.
- Read “Applying Subordinating Conjunctions” in Advanced English
- Complete the Run-Ons and Splices Test in Blackboard.

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FIXING RUN-ONS & COMMA SPLICES

It's inevitable. In using a variety of sentence types in your writing, you will have errors. One of the most common errors students have are **run-on sentences**.

The Basics

Just as short, incomplete sentences can be problematic, lengthy sentences can be problematic too.

As writers we want to ensure our sentences are always form a complete idea to avoid confusion for our reader. A “complete sentence” is also known as an **independent clause** which we learned about in the previous chapter. Here's an example:

I have to complete my project by tomorrow. It is worth 30% of my grade.

Both sentences are independent clauses. They both express a complete idea.

However, many people make mistakes when they incorrectly combine two or more independent clauses. This is what is known as a **run-on sentence**.

A **run-on sentence** can take two main forms. Before we tell you what those are, see if you articulate it on your own. Read the examples below and see if you can identify what is wrong with each.

Example 1: I have to complete my project by tomorrow it is worth 30% of my grade.

Example 2: I have to complete my project by tomorrow, it is worth 30% of my grade.

Example 1 is known as a **fused sentence**. This means that two independent clauses are combined without any punctuation.

Example 2 is known as **comma splice**. This means that two independent clauses are incorrectly joined by a comma.

Look at two more examples below. Can you tell which one is a **fused sentence** and which is a **comma splice**?

Example 1: We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

Example 2: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes play all over the yard.

Example 1 is a **comma splice**. Example 2 is a **fused sentence**. Let's do some more practice identifying the two.

Check Your Understanding: Fused Sentence or Comma Splice?

Read the run-on sentences below. Decide if they are an example of a fused sentence or a comma splice.

Fused Sentence or Comma Splice? (Text Version)

1. I think we will finish the report in time we will get a good grade on it.
 - a. Fused Sentence
 - b. Comma Sentence
2. The results of the study are inclusive we have decided that we cannot move forward with the project.
 - a. Comma Splice
 - b. Fused Sentence
3. It is our recommendation that your company follow this design, it will save you money in the long run.
 - a. Comma Splice
 - b. Fused Sentence
4. The research shows a need for this service, we can start rolling it out at anytime.
 - a. Comma Splice
 - b. Fused Sentence

5. My supervisor really liked my report, he wants me to present it to the board next week.
 - a. Fused Sentence
 - b. Comma Splice

6. I enjoy writing reports they give me a chance to process my ideas.
 - a. Comma Splice
 - b. Fused Sentence

Check your answer ¹

Activity source: “Fused Sentence or Comma Splice?” from “[Chapter 11: Run-on Sentences](#)” In *Effective Professional Communication: A Rhetorical Approach* by Rebekah Bennetch, Corey Owen and Zachary Keeseey, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)

Fixes for Run-on Sentences

While **run-on sentences** are extremely common, they are also easily fixed by using punctuation, **coordinating conjunctions**, or **subordinate conjunctions**.

Punctuation

A period and a semicolon are the most common punctuation marks used to fix **run-on sentences**.

A period will correct the error by creating two separate sentences.

Run-on: There were no seats left, we had to stand in the back.

Complete Sentence: There were no seats left. We had to stand in the back.

Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are **independent clauses**.

Many people mistakenly assume a semicolon can be used like a comma, and that is not correct.

Run-on: The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Complete Sentence: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Make sure that both ideas are closely related before you use a semicolon. If they are not related, you cannot use a semicolon.

For example, a semicolon can't be used in the following sentence because both ideas are not related:

Incorrect semicolon use: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we ate fast food for dinner.

Now, you might be saying, "What if they ate fast food because of the accident? Wouldn't the two sentences be related then?"

In such a case, you may be right. But it falls on the writer to make that distinction clear to the reader. It's **your job** to make sure the connection between your ideas is clear! This can be done with **transition words**.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a [transition word](#) [\[New Tab\]](#) to show the connection between the two thoughts.

After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma:

Run-on: The project was put on hold we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Complete Sentence: The project was put on hold; *however*, we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

We can also apply this to our incorrect example above:

Incorrect Semicolon Use: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we ate fast food for dinner.

Correct Semicolon Use: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; therefore, we ate fast food for dinner.

Coordinating Conjunctions

You can also fix **run-on sentences** by adding a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

Remember, a **coordinating conjunction** acts as a link between two clauses.

These are the seven **coordinating conjunctions** that you can use: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so*.

Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses.

Run-on: The new printer was installed, no one knew how to use it.

Complete Sentence: The new printer was installed, *but* no one knew how to use it.

Subordinate Conjunctions

Adding **subordinate conjunctions** is another way to link independent clauses. Like the **coordinating conjunctions**, **subordinate conjunctions** show a relationship between two independent clauses. There are many different **subordinate conjunctions**. Check out “[What Is a Subordinating Conjunction? \[New Tab\]](#)” from Grammarly.com to see a list.

Run-on: We took the elevator, the others still got there before us.

Complete Sentence: *Although* we took the elevator, the others got there before us.

In the example above, the run-on is a **comma splice**, which results from joining two complete ideas with a comma. In the correct example, the subordinating conjunction *although* appears at the start to show the relationship between the sentences. Now, it’s okay to combine both sentences with a comma.

Here’s another example:

Run-on: Cobwebs covered the furniture the room hadn’t been used in years.

Complete sentence: Cobwebs covered the furniture *because* the room hadn’t been used in years.

In this example, the run-on is a **fused sentence**. We fixed this issue by inserting the **subordinate conjunction** *because* in-between both sentences.

Check Your Understanding: Fixing Run-on Sentences

A reader can get lost or lose interest in material that is too dense and rambling. This can easily happen when there are too many **run-on sentences** in a paragraph. Use what you have learned to correct the following passages. When you think you have a solution, compare it to the possible answer. Changes are bolded and colored purple.

If your answers are a little different, that's okay, as long as you followed the strategies discussed. If you're not sure, please ask your instructor.

The report is due on Wednesday, but we're flying back from Miami that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that day she suggested that we come back a day early to get the report done and I told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his boss, she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn't have to make any edits or changes to the file our new deadline is next Friday.

Run-On Sentence Review 1 – Possible Solution²

Anna tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a waiting list so she put our names down on the list when the day of our reservation arrived we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up unexpectedly which was good because we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we'd expected to wait to be seated.

Run-On Sentence Review 2 – Possible Solution:³

Without a doubt, my favorite artist is Leonardo da Vinci, not because of his paintings but because of his fascinating designs, models, and sketches, including plans for scuba gear, a flying machine, and a life-size mechanical lion that actually walked and moved its head. His paintings are beautiful too, especially when you see the computer enhanced versions researchers use a variety of methods to discover and enhance

the paintings' original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man's genius.

Run-On Sentence Review 3 – Possible Solution ⁴

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Commas

Check Your Understanding: Commas

Check Your Understanding: Commas (Text Version)

1. Choose the sentence that is punctuated correctly
 - a. Gerry, the team captain, took in the equipment.
 - b. Gerry the team captain took in the equipment.
 - c. Gerry the team captain, took in the equipment.
2. True or false, the following sentence is correct:
On Monday March 7 2010 we will open a new branch of our business in Winnipeg Manitoba.
3. True or false, in order to correct the following sentence (below), a total of four commas should be used:
On Monday March 7 2010 we will open a new branch of our business in Winnipeg Manitoba.
4. Which sentence is correct?

- a. Moreover I'd like to have my uncle Bill at the hearing also.
 - b. Moreover, I'd like to have my uncle Bill at the hearing also.
5. Which sentence is correct?
 - a. If you refer to the operating manual you will find the instructions for automatic sheet feeding on page 31.
 - b. If you refer to the operating manual, you will find the instructions for automatic sheet feeding on page 31.
6. After which words should commas be added in this sentence?

Our lawyer advises however that July Chan whose fence was damaged in the car accident be present at the hearing.

 - a. advises; however; chan
 - b. however; chan
 - c. advises; however; chan; accident
7. Which of the following sentences using commas is correct?
 - a. Air Canada now offers flights to Milan Frankfurt, and Cairo.
 - b. Air Canada now offers flights to Milan, Frankfurt, and Cairo.
 - c. Air Canada now offers flights to London Frankfurt and Rome.
8. Where in this sentence should a comma be placed?

We provide sophisticated document handling and we also supply advanced finishing capabilities for complete stapled sets at the touch of a button.

 - a. after handling
 - b. after sets
 - c. after capabilities
9. True or false, the following sentence is correct:

Mail the software to Ms. Kathleen Smith, 3540 Avocado Road, Regina, Saskatchewan S4R 2S5, immediately.
10. Where should a comma be placed in the following sentence?

If your account exceeds \$100000 it will continue to be insured for six months.

 - a. \$100,000
 - b. \$100000,

Check your answers⁵

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Check Your Understanding: Using Commas Correctly

Check Your Understanding: Using Commas Correctly (Text Version)

Fill in the missing words using the words below:

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| • for instance | • because | • because |
| • because | • if | • meanwhile |
| • 20 commas (,) | • but | |
| • but | • so | |

Commas do a lot of work in sentences _____ such as separating independent clauses in compound sentences. _____ take a look at where the comma goes in this sentence: Much of Canada’s industry depends on the international economy _____ it is difficult to predict which fields will offer increased employment in the near future and which will decline.

We also use commas to separate independent and dependent clauses in complex sentences. Take a look at where the comma goes in this sentence: _____technology-based industries are growing _____ many people choose to go into this field of work.

Drag words and commas into the right places in the following sentences:

_____ some couples may find they must depend on two incomes for survival
 _____ they may find that they need to hire others to take care of their children
 _____ aging parents _____ finances _____ and possibly even house and garden maintenance. This is a reality that higher education students should keep in mind as they decide which industry to go into. Service industries _____ such as health care
 _____ tourism _____ and hospitality are growing fields. It’s safe to say that people trained in health care _____ hospitality _____ child care (and pet care!) will find lots of job opportunities in the next three to five years. _____ job prospects in the aviation industry are hard to predict _____ they depend on export sales

and on business and holiday travel. We also know that people with digital skills will be needed in plastics processing _____ mould making _____and environmental technology. For college students in technology and service programs _____the future looks bright _____ they must remember that a degree or diploma does not guarantee job security. New graduates must remember that adaptability and flexibility are crucial to success in today’s workplace. It’s true that qualified workers will find their skills in high demand _____ they wish to maintain their employer’s interest in them _____ they must be prepared to commit themselves to continuous professional development.

Check your answers⁶

Activity source: “Grammar: Using Commas Correctly” by Sarika Narinesingh, licensed under [CC BY NC SA 4.0](#).

Attribution & References

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Possel, H. (n.d.). *Transition Words*. Smart Words. <https://www.smart-words.org/linking-words/transition-words.html>

Traffis, C. (2020, December 16). *What is a subordinating conjunction?* Grammarly. <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/subordinating-conjunctions/>

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Notes

1. 1) b 2) a 3) b 4) b 5) a 6) a
 2. The report is due on Wednesday, but we're flying back from Miami that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that **day**. **She** suggested that we come back a day early to get the report **done**. **However**, I told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his **boss**, **and** she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn't have to make any edits or changes to the **file**. **Our** new deadline is next Friday.
 3. Anna tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a waiting **list**. **She** put our names down on the **list**. **When** the day of our reservation arrived, we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up **unexpectedly**. **As a result**, we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we'd expected to wait to be seated.
 4. Without a doubt, my favorite artist is Leonardo da **Vinci**. **Not** because of his paintings but because of his fascinating designs, models, and **sketches**. **These** include plans for scuba gear, a flying machine, and a life-size mechanical lion that actually walked and moved its head. His paintings are beautiful too, especially when you see the computer enhanced **versions**. **Researchers** use a variety of methods to discover and enhance the paintings' original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man's genius.
- 5.
- | | | |
|----------|-------|---------|
| 1. a. | 5. b. | 9. True |
| 2. False | 6. c. | 10. a. |
| 3. True | 7. b. | |
| 4. b. | 8. a. | |
6. Commas do a lot of work in sentences, such as separating independent clauses in compound sentences. For instance, take a look at where the comma goes in this sentence: Much of Canada's industry depends on the international economy *,* **SO** it is difficult to predict which fields will offer increased employment in the near future and which will decline. We also use commas to separate independent and dependent clauses in complex sentences. Take a look at where the comma goes in this sentence: **BECAUSE** technology-based industries are growing, many people choose to go into this field of work. Drag words and commas into the right places in the following sentences: Because some couples may find they must depend on two incomes for survival, they may find that they need to hire others to take care of their children, aging parents, finances, and possibly even house and garden maintenance. This is a reality that higher education students should keep in mind as they decide which industry to go into. Service industries, such as health care, tourism, and hospitality are growing fields. It's safe to say that people trained in health care, hospitality, child care (and pet care!) will find lots of job opportunities in the next three to five years. Meanwhile, job prospects in the aviation industry are hard to predict because they depend on export sales and on business and holiday travel. We also know that people with digital skills will be needed in plastics processing, mould making, and environmental technology. For college students in technology and service programs, the future looks bright, but they must remember that a degree or diploma does not guarantee job security. New graduates must remember that adaptability and flexibility are crucial to success in today's workplace. It's true that qualified workers will find their skills in high demand, but, if they wish to maintain their employer's interest in them, they must be prepared to commit themselves to continuous professional development.

COMMAS

One of the punctuation clues to reading you may encounter is the comma. The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

- **Introductory word:** Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- **Lists:** The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
- **Coordinating adjectives:** He was tired, hungry, and late.
- **Conjunctions in compound sentences:** The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- **Interrupting words:** I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters:** The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.

Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

Without spoiling the surprise, we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, *without spoiling the surprise* is an introductory phrase, while *we need to tell her to save the date* is the main sentence. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma also follows the introductory word.

Ironically, she already had plans for that day.

Check Your Understanding: Introductory Word or Phrase

Look for the introductory word or phrase. On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Every year we go camping in the woods.
5. Without a doubt green is my favourite color.
6. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
7. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.
8. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word *and* before the last item. However, you do not need to include a comma after the last item.

We'll need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store.

The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers, and pineapple chunks.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas.

Note: when listing adjectives, unlike nouns, the word *and* does not always need to appear before the last adjective.

It was a bright, windy, clear day.

Our kite glowed red, yellow, and blue in the morning sunlight.

Check Your Understanding: Comma Placement

Exercise 2 (Text Version)

Identify whether the given statement has correct comma placement.

1. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet, uneventful, unproductive, day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks, Todds and Smiths before their portfolio reviews, next week.
4. Michael, Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold, wet, aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name, on the board, in clear, precise, delicate letters.

Check Your Answers: ¹

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Commas Before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as *for*, *and*, or *but*. For a full list of conjunctions, see [Chapter 11 “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?”](#).

He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.

He says his fever is gone, but he is still very tired.

Check Your Understanding: Compound Sentences

Exercise 3 (Text Version)

On your own sheet of paper, create a compound sentence by combining the two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.
2. He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.
3. The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.
4. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.
5. I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.
6. I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.
7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch. We will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.
8. I've got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.
9. The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.
10. I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let's ask Leonardo for his help.

Check Your Answers:²

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Commas before and after Interrupting Words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking

about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called interrupting words. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or in the middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.
Luckily, some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated on from the rest of the sentence by a pair of commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.
We have known, for hundreds of years now, that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

Check Your Understanding: Inserting Commas

Exercise 4 (Text Version)

On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and insert commas to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Check Your Answers:³

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Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and emails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.

Her birthday is May 5.

He visited the country in July 2009.

I registered for the conference on March 7, 2010, so we should get our tickets soon.

You also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the province and the postal code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Hamilton, Ontario L0P 1B0.

After moving to Victoria, British Columbia, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an email or a letter, you add a comma after the

greeting word or the person's name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Hello,
I would like more information about your job posting.
Thank you,
Anita Al-Sayf

Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf,
Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.
Sincerely,
Jack Fromont

Check Your Understanding: Commas to Edit Letters

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about using commas to edit the following letter.

March 27 2010
Alexa Marché
14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6
Beauceville Quebec G0M 1K0
Dear Mr. Timmons
Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any time.
Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.
Thank you
Alexa

Check Your Understanding: Commas to Edit Paragraphs

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.
2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any e-mails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Wei and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Mohammed took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2023. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

Watch It: Comma Story

[Watch Comma story-Terisa Folaron \(5 mins\) on YouTube](#)

Attributions & References

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Notes

1.
 1. Correct.
 2. Incorrect.
 3. Incorrect.
 4. Correct.
 5. Correct.
 6. Incorrect.
2.
 1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday, but the weather delayed the presentation for four days.
 2. He wanted a snack before bedtime, so he ate some fruit.
 3. The patient is in the next room, so I can hardly hear anything. / The patient is in the next room, but I can hardly hear anything.
 4. We could go camping for vacation, or we could go to the beach for vacation.
 5. I want to get a better job, so I am taking courses at night.
 6. I cannot move forward on this project, but I cannot afford to stop on this project.
 7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch, so we will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.
 8. I’ve got to get this paper done, but I have class in ten minutes.
 9. The weather was clear yesterday, so we decided to go on a picnic.
 10. I have never dealt with this client before, but I know Leonardo has worked with them, so let’s ask Leonardo for his help.
3.
 1. I asked my neighbors, the retired couple from Florida, to bring in my mail.
 2. Without a doubt, his work has improved over the last few weeks.
 3. Our professor, Mr. Alamut, drilled the lessons into our heads.
 4. The meeting is at noon, unfortunately, which means I will be late for lunch.
 5. We came in time for the last part of dinner, but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
 6. All of a sudden, our network crashed and we lost our files.
 7. Alex, hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

APPLYING COORDINATION CONJUNCTIONS

Connecting sentences with coordinate or subordinate clauses creates more coherent paragraphs, and in turn, produces more effective writing. Read the following writing excerpt:

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

This section examines several ways to combine sentences with coordination and subordination, using this excerpt as an example.

Coordination

Coordination joins two independent clauses that contain related ideas of equal importance.

Original sentences: I spent my entire paycheck last week. I am staying home this weekend.

In their current form, these sentences contain two separate ideas that may or may not be related. Am I staying home this week *because* I spent my paycheck, or is there another reason for my lack of enthusiasm to leave the house? To indicate a relationship between the two ideas, we can use the coordinating conjunction *so*:

Revised sentence: I spent my entire paycheck last week, **so** I am staying home this weekend.

The revised sentence illustrates that the two ideas are connected. Notice that the sentence retains two independent clauses (*I spent my entire paycheck*; *I am staying home this weekend*) because each can stand alone as a complete idea.

Coordinating conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction is a word that joins two independent clauses. The most common coordinating

conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Note that a comma precedes the coordinating conjunction when joining two clauses.

Using Coordinating Conjunctions to join Clauses

Independent Clause	Coordinating Conjunction	Independent Clause	Revised Sentence
I will not be attending the dance.	for (indicates a reason or cause)	I have no one to go with.	I will not be attending the dance, for I have no one to go with.
I plan to stay home.	and (joins two ideas)	I will complete an essay for class.	I plan to stay home, and I will complete an essay for class.
Jessie isn't going to be at the dance.	nor (indicates a negative)	Harjot won't be there either.	Jessie isn't going to be at the dance, nor will Harjot be there.
The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance.	but (indicates a contrast)	I don't think many people are going.	The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance, but I don't think many people are going.
I might go to the next fundraising event.	or (offers an alternative)	I might donate some money to the cause.	I might go to the next fundraising event, or I might donate some money to the cause.
My parents are worried that I am antisocial.	yet (indicates a reason)	I have many friends at school.	My parents are worried that I am antisocial, yet I have many friends at school.
Buying a new dress is expensive.	so (indicates a result)	By staying home I will save money.	Buying a new dress is expensive, so by staying home I will save money.

TIP: To help you remember the seven coordinating conjunctions, think of the acronym FANBOYS: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*. Remember that when you use a coordinating conjunction in a sentence, a comma should precede it.

Conjunctive adverbs

Another method of joining two independent clauses with related and equal ideas is to use a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon. A conjunctive adverb is a linking word that demonstrates a relationship between two clauses. Read the following sentences:

Original sentences: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics. They train every day.

Since these sentences contain two equal and related ideas, they may be joined using a conjunctive adverb. Now, read the revised sentence:

Revised sentence: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics; therefore, they train every day.

The revised sentence explains the relationship between Bridget’s desire to take part in the next Olympics and their daily training. Notice that the conjunctive adverb comes after a semicolon that separates the two clauses and is followed by a comma.

Review the following chart of some common conjunctive adverbs with examples of how they are used:

Common Conjunctive Adverbs

Function	Conjunctive Adverb	Example
Addition	also, furthermore, moreover, besides	Alicia was late for class and stuck in traffic; furthermore, her shoe heel had broken and she had forgotten her lunch.
Comparison	similarly, likewise	Recycling aluminum cans is beneficial to the environment; similarly, reusing plastic bags and switching off lights reduces waste.
Contrast	instead, however, conversely	Most people do not walk to work; instead, they drive or take public transit.
Emphasis	namely, certainly, indeed	The Siberian tiger is a rare creature; indeed, there are fewer than five hundred left in the wild.
Cause and Effect	accordingly, consequently, hence, thus	I missed my train this morning; consequently, I was late for my meeting.
Time	finally, next, subsequently, then	Danzel crossed the barrier, jumped over the wall, and pushed through the hole in the fence; finally, he made it to the station.

Take a look at the excerpt on wine production and identify some areas in which the writer might use coordination:

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Now look at this revised paragraph. Did you coordinate the same sentences? You may find that your answers are different because there are usually several ways to join two independent clauses.

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of

skins, seeds, and juice. **The stems are removed, for they contain harsh-tasting tannins.** Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. **It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized and also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes, however, many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.**

Check Your Understanding: Using Coordinating Conjunctions and Conjunctive Adverbs

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using either a coordinating conjunction or a conjunctive adverb. Then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Pets are not allowed in Mr. Taylor’s building. He owns several cats and a parrot.
2. New legislation prevents drivers from sending or reading text messages while driving. Many people continue to use their phones illegally.
3. The professor concluded that the student had forgotten to submit his assignment. By the time the deadline had passed, there was still no assignment.
4. Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water. Flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.
5. Tara carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer. The tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.
6. When he lost his car key, Simon attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paper clip. He called the manufacturer for advice.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Attribution & References

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ADDING SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Subordination

Subordination joins two sentences with related ideas by merging them into a main clause (a complete sentence) and a dependent clause (a construction that relies on the main clause to complete its meaning). Coordination allows a writer to give equal weight to the two ideas that are being combined, and subordination enables a writer to emphasize one idea over the other. Take a look at the following sentences:

Original sentences: Tracy stopped to help the injured man. She would be late for work.

To illustrate that these two ideas are related, we can rewrite them as a single sentence using the subordinating conjunction *even though*.

Revised sentence: Even though Tracy would be late for work, she stopped to help the injured man.

In the revised version, we now have an independent clause (*she stopped to help the injured man*) that stands as a complete sentence and a dependent clause (*even though Tracy would be late for work*) that is subordinate to the main clause. Notice that the revised sentence emphasizes the fact that Tracy stopped to help the injured man, rather than the fact she would be late for work. We could also write the sentence this way:

Revised sentence: Tracy stopped to help the injured man even though she would be late for work.

The meaning remains the same in both sentences, with the subordinating conjunction *even though* introducing the dependent clause.

TIP: To punctuate sentences correctly, look at the position of the main clause and the subordinate clause. If a subordinate clause precedes the main clause, use a comma. If the subordinate clause follows the main clause, no punctuation is required.

Subordinating Conjunctions

A subordinating conjunction is a word that joins a subordinate (dependent) clause to a main (independent) clause. Review the following chart of some common subordinating conjunctions and examples of how they are used:

Common Subordinating Conjunctions with Examples

Function	Subordinating Conjunction	Example
Concession	although, while, though, whereas, even though	Sarah completed her report even though she had to stay late to get it done.
Condition	if, unless, until	Until we know what is causing the problem, we will not be able to fix it.
Manner	as if, as, though	Everyone in the conference room stopped talking at once, as though they had been stunned into silence.
Place	where, wherever	Rita is in Toronto where she has several important client meetings.
Reason	because, since, so that, in order that	Because the air conditioning was turned up so high, everyone in the office wore sweaters.
Time	after, before, while, once, when	After the meeting had finished, we all went to lunch.

Take a look at the excerpt and identify some areas in which the writer might use subordination:

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Now look at this revised paragraph and compare your answers. You will probably notice that there are many different ways to subordinate sentences.

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. **Because the stems contain harsh-tasting tannins, they are removed.** Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. **Here, sulfur dioxide is added in order to prevent the liquid from becoming oxidized.** Sulfur dioxide also destroys bacteria. **Although some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes, many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.**

Check Your Understanding: Combining Sentences

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using a subordinating conjunction and then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Jake is going to Haida Gwaii. There are beautiful beaches in Haida Gwaii.
2. A snowstorm disrupted traffic all over the east coast. There will be long delivery delays this week.
3. My neighbor had his television volume turned up too high. I banged on his door and asked him to keep the noise down.
4. Kathryn prepared the potato salad and the sautéed vegetables. Stewart marinated the chicken.
5. Romeo poisons himself. Juliet awakes to find Romeo dead and stabs herself with a dagger.

Check Your Understanding: Coordination or Subordination

Join the bolded sentences using coordination or subordination. Check your revised sentences for punctuation.

The yeast is added to the must. Alcoholic fermentation then begins. Here, the red wine production process differs from the method used in white wine production. **Red wine is fermented for a shorter time. It is fermented at a higher temperature.** Whereas white wines may ferment for over a month, red wines typically ferment for less than two weeks. **During fermentation, contact between the skins and the juice releases tannins and flavor compounds into the must. This process is known as maceration.** Maceration may occur before, during, or after fermentation. **The fermentation process is completed. The next stage is pressing.** Many methods are used for pressing, the most common of which is basket pressing.

Check your Understanding: Subordinating Conjunctions

Using subordinating conjunctions to connect ideas – Strategy # 3 (Text Version)

The nice thing about subordinating conjunctions is that you can usually play with their organization. The connecting word can come at the beginning of a sentence or in the middle.

Always compare the two structures and decide which one you think is more effective. Using different structures can add variety to your writing.

Let's see if you can identify subordinating conjunctions and their positions in sentences.

1. Identify all the subordinating conjunctions in the following sentences:
 - a. Because the winter storm came so suddenly, no one had time to prepare for it.
 - b. No one had time to prepare for the winter storm because it came so suddenly.
 - c. After he discovered she didn't have any money, he decided not to marry her.
 - d. He decided not to marry her after he discovered she had no money.
 - e. Even if you don't follow the recipe exactly, the bread will turn out fine.
 - f. Some people are afraid of challenges while others embrace them.
 - g. Even though he understands the dangers of smoking, he refuses to quit.
 - h. I will go running even if it is freezing cold.

Subordinating conjunctions serve different purposes. You need to understand the meanings of subordinating conjunctions to use them effectively.

Answer the following questions to check your understanding of the meanings of different subordinating conjunctions.

2. Organize the different subordinate conjunctions listed below into the Subordinate Conjunctions table.
 - whenever
 - after
 - now that
 - because
 - even though
 - whereas
 - although
 - if
 - unless
 - only if
 - even if

Subordinate Conjunctions

Time	Cause/Effect	Opposition	Condition
------	--------------	------------	-----------

3. Fill in the blanks with logical subordinating conjunctions. Choose one of the following: in case, even though, since, only if, when, while, whereas, even if. Choose a different word each time.
1. You can go on to the next slide _____ you finish this one first.
 2. _____ we were walking through the park, we saw many deer.
 3. _____ most restaurants close by 10:00, many clubs stay open until 3:00 am.
 4. I refuse to go that party _____ you pay me.
 5. _____ no one was interested in the meetings, they were cancelled.
 6. Jamil refused to wear a tie to the restaurant _____ it was required.
 7. _____ we can't guarantee your tree will live forever, we can promise it will last as long as your house.
 8. We brought an umbrella _____ it rains.

Activity source: “Using Subordinating Conjunctions” by Paul Van Raay, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Summary

In this module, you looked at what run-on sentences are and how they can impede fluency and coherence in writing. Next, you examined how to avoid run-on sentences by adding correct punctuation, and/or coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. You also reviewed all uses of the comma and practiced including them correctly in our writing.

Remember to apply these sentence skills in all your future writing pieces and edit for run-on sentences specifically.

In the next module, you will be learning about parallelism in your writing.

Attribution & References

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PARALELLISM

Introduction

In the previous module, you practiced avoiding run-on sentences and using commas correctly. Be sure to implement these concepts in all your writing tasks moving forward.

In this module, you will learn about parallel writing: a method of writing that uses similar structures in one sentence in order to create balance. This type of grammar is considered a more advanced concept, for more academic and professional, polished writing.

Learning Objectives

- Study parallelism in writing.
- Identify faulty parallelism.
- Apply ways to correct faulty parallelism.

To Do List

- Watch the videos and read the information about parallelism.
- Complete the practice activities.
- Complete the Parallelism Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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PARALLELISM IN WRITING

Watch it: Parallelism

[Watch Parallelism in writing \(4 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Watch It: Parallel Structure or Parallelism

[Watch Parallel structure or parallelism \(4 mins\) on YouTube](#)

Attribution & References

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PARALLEL STRUCTURE

Earlier in this chapter, we learned that increasing sentence variety adds interest to a piece of writing and makes the reading process more enjoyable for others. Using a mixture of sentence lengths and patterns throughout an essay is an important writing technique. However, it is equally important to avoid introducing variation within individual sentences. A strong sentence is composed of balanced parts that all have the same structure. In this section, we will examine how to create a balanced sentence structure by using parallelism.

Using Parallelism

Parallelism is the use of similar structure in related words, clauses, or phrases. It creates a sense of rhythm and balance within a sentence. As readers, we often correct faulty parallelism—a lack of parallel structure—intuitively because an unbalanced sentence sounds awkward and poorly constructed. Read the following sentences aloud:

Faulty parallelism: Kelly had to iron, do the washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Faulty parallelism: Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and to have good eyesight.

Faulty parallelism: Ali prefers jeans to wearing a suit.

All of these sentences contain faulty parallelism. Although they are factually correct, the construction is clunky and confusing. In the first example, three different verb forms are used. In the second and third examples, the writer begins each sentence by using a noun (*coordination, jeans*), but ends with a phrase (*to have good eyesight, wearing a suit*). Now read the same three sentences that have correct parallelism.

Correct parallelism: Kelly had to do the ironing, washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Correct parallelism: Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and good eyesight.

Correct parallelism: Ali prefers wearing jeans to wearing a suit.

When these sentences are written using a parallel structure, they sound more aesthetically pleasing because they are balanced. Repetition of grammatical construction also minimizes the amount of work the reader has

to do to decode the sentence. This enables the reader to focus on the main idea in the sentence and not on how the sentence is put together.

Tip

A simple way to check for parallelism in your writing is to make sure you have paired nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, prepositional phrases with prepositional phrases, and so on. Underline each element in a sentence and check that the corresponding element uses the same grammatical form.

Creating Parallelism Using Coordinating Conjunctions

When you connect two clauses using a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*), make sure that the same grammatical structure is used on each side of the conjunction. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like **to listen to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.

Correct parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like **listening to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.

The first sentence uses two different verb forms (*to listen, talking*). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (*and*) is the same, creating a parallel sentence.

The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series:

Faulty parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits, or lowering workers' wages**.

Correct parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits, or lower workers' wages**.

The first sentence contains two items that use the same verb construction (*reduce, cut*) and a third item that uses a different verb form (*lowering*). The second sentence uses the same verb construction in all three items, creating a parallel structure.

Check Your Understanding: Create Parallel Structure Using Coordinating Conjunctions

Create Parallel Structure Using Coordinating Conjunctions (Text Version)

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using coordinating conjunctions.

1. Mr. Holloway enjoys reading and to play his guitar at weekends.
2. The doctor told Mrs. Franklin that she should either eat less or should exercise more.
3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and were quick on their feet.
4. I have read the book, but I have not watched the movie version.
5. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning, or by setting aside short periods of time in which to answer e-mail queries.

Check Your Answers:¹

Activity source: “14.3: Exercise 1” adapted into H5P activity by Shaima and oeratgc for [14.3 – Parallelism](#)” In *Communication Essentials for College* by Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) based on content from “[14.3 – Parallelism](#)” In *Writing for Success* by University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#).

Creating Parallelism Using *Than* or *As*

When you are making a comparison, the two items being compared should have a parallel structure.

Comparing two items without using parallel structure can lead to confusion about what is being compared.

Comparisons frequently use the words *than* or *as*, and the items on each side of these comparison words should be parallel. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: **Swimming in the ocean** is much tougher than **a pool**.

Correct parallelism: **Swimming in the ocean** is much tougher than **swimming in a pool**.

In the first sentence, the elements before the comparison word (*than*) are not equal to the elements after the comparison word. It appears that the writer is comparing an action (*swimming*) with a noun (*a pool*). In the second sentence, the writer uses the same grammatical construction to create a parallel structure. This clarifies that an action is being compared with another action.

To correct some instances of faulty parallelism, it may be necessary to add or delete words in a sentence.

Faulty parallelism: A brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.

Correct parallelism: Going for a brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.

In this example, it is necessary to add the verb phrase *going for* to the sentence in order to clarify that the act of walking is being compared to the act of running.

Check Your Understanding: Create Parallel Structure Using *Than* or *As*

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using *than* or *as*.

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.
2. How you look in the workplace is just as important as your behavior.
3. The firefighter spoke more of his childhood than he talked about his job.
4. Indian cuisine is far tastier than the food of Great Britain.
5. Jim's opponent was as tall as Jim and he carried far more weight.

Creating Parallelism Using Correlative Conjunctions

A correlative conjunction is a paired conjunction that connects two equal parts of a sentence and shows the relationship between them. Common correlative conjunctions include the following:

- either...or
- not only...but also

- neither...nor
- whether...or
- rather...than
- both...and

Correlative conjunctions should follow the same grammatical structure to create a parallel sentence. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **can we take** evasive action.

Correct parallelism: We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **take** evasive action.

When using a correlative conjunction, the words, phrases, or clauses following each part should be parallel. In the first sentence, the construction of the second part of the sentence does not match the construction of the first part. In the second sentence, omitting needless words and matching verb constructions create a parallel structure. Sometimes, rearranging a sentence corrects faulty parallelism.

Faulty parallelism: It was both a long movie and poorly written.

Correct parallelism: The movie was both long and poorly written.

Tip

To see examples of parallelism in use, read some of the great historical speeches by rhetoricians such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Notice how they use parallel structures to emphasize important points and to create a smooth, easily understandable oration.

Here is a link to text, audio, video, and the music of [Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream"](#) [\[New Tab\]](#) .

Writing at Work

Speechwriters use parallelism not only within sentences but also throughout paragraphs and beyond. Repeating particular key phrases throughout a speech is an effective way of tying a paragraph together as a cohesive whole and creating a sense of importance. This technique can be adapted to any piece of writing, but it may be especially useful for creating a proposal or other type of persuasive workplace document.

Note that the spelling and grammar checker on most word processors will not draw attention to faulty parallelism. When proofreading a document, read it aloud and listen for sentences that sound awkward or poorly phrased.

Check Your Understanding: Create Parallel Structure Using Correlative Conjunctions

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using correlative conjunctions.

1. The cyclist owns both a mountain bike and has a racing bike.
2. The movie not only contained lots of action, but also it offered an important lesson.
3. My current job is neither exciting nor is it meaningful.
4. Jason would rather listen to his father than be taking advice from me.
5. We are neither interested in buying a vacuum cleaner nor do we want to utilize your carpet cleaning service.

Check Your Understanding: Revising Faulty Parallelism

Read through the following excerpt from Alex's essay and revise any instances of faulty parallelism. Rewrite the sentences to create a parallel structure.

Owning a pet has proven to be extremely beneficial to people's health. Pets help lower blood pressure, boost immunity, and are lessening anxiety. Studies indicate that children who grow up in a household with cats or dogs are at a lower risk of developing allergies or suffer from asthma. Owning a dog offers an additional bonus; it makes people more sociable. Dogs are natural conversation starters and this not only helps to draw people out of social isolation but also they are more likely to find a romantic partner.

Benefits of pet ownership for elderly people include less anxiety, lower insurance costs, and they also gain peace of mind. A study of Alzheimer's patients showed that patients have fewer anxious outbursts if there is an animal in the home. Some doctors even keep dogs in the office to act as on-site therapists. In short, owning a pet keeps you healthy, happy, and is a great way to help you relax.

Summary

Parallelism is the use of similar structures within a sentence in order to create flow, rhythm, and balance.

Faulty parallelism is awkward and lacks the cohesion for smooth reading.

Parallelism may be created by connecting two clauses or making a list using coordinating conjunctions; by comparing two items using *than* or *as*; or by connecting two parts of a sentence using correlative conjunctions.

Remember to edit all your future writing for this advanced and balanced sentence skill.

Module 3 reviews misplaced and dangling modifiers.

Attribution & References

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Notes

1.
 1. Mr. Holloway enjoys reading and playing his guitar at weekends.
 2. The doctor told Mrs. Franklin that she should either eat less or should exercise more.
 3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and were quick on their feet
 4. I have read the book, but I have not watched the movie version.
 5. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning, or by setting aside short periods of time in which to answer e-mail queries.

MISPLACED AND DANGLING MODIFIERS

Introduction

So far in this unit, you have looked at run-on sentences and how to avoid them, as well as parallelism in writing.

In this module, you will explore modifiers in sentences and how they are sometimes misplaced which can unintentionally change the meaning or cause confusion.

Learning Objectives

- Review the meaning of modifiers.
- Recognize misplaced and dangling modifiers.
- Apply correct use of modifiers in sentences and paragraphs.

To Do List

- Read Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers and complete the Check Your Understanding exercises.
- Watch Misplaced & Dangling Modifier Videos: Introduction Parts 1 and 2.
- Review Learning Activity 1: Modifiers and complete the interactive activities.
- Complete the Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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MISPLACED AND DANGLING MODIFIERS

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Sometimes writers use modifiers incorrectly, leading to strange and unintentionally humorous sentences. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. If either of these errors occurs, readers can no longer read smoothly. Instead, they become stumped trying to figure out *what* the writer meant to say. A writer's goal must always be to communicate clearly and to avoid distracting the reader with strange sentences or awkward sentence constructions. The good news is that these errors can be easily overcome.

Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous.

Incorrect: She wore a bicycle helmet on her head *that was too large*.

Correct: She wore a bicycle helmet *that was too large* on her head.

- Notice in the incorrect sentence it sounds as if her head was too large! Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person's head. The corrected version of the sentence clarifies the writer's meaning.

Look at the following two examples:

Incorrect: They bought a kitten for my brother *they call Shadow*.

Correct: They bought a kitten *they call Shadow* for my brother.

- In the incorrect sentence, it seems that the brother's name is *Shadow*. That's because the modifier is too far from the word it modifies, which is *kitten*.

Incorrect: The patient was referred to the physician *with stomach pains*.

Correct: The patient *with stomach pains* was referred to the physician.

- The incorrect sentence reads as if it is the physician who has stomach pains! What the writer means is that the patient has stomach pains.

Tip

Simple modifiers like *only*, *almost*, *just*, *nearly*, and *barely* often get used incorrectly because writers often stick them in the wrong place.

Confusing: Tyler almost found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

Repaired: Tyler found almost fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

- How do you almost find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer.

Check Your Understanding: Correcting Misplaced Modifiers

Correcting Misplaced Modifiers (Text Version)

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called "Speed Racer."
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn't drink or smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.

7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

Check your answers:¹

Activity source: “11.7: Exercise 1” adapted into H5P activity by Shaima and oeratgc for “[11.7– Misplaced And Dangling Modifiers](#)” In *Communication Essentials for College* by Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) based on content from “[2.7 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers](#)” In *Writing for Success* by University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#).

Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, the modifier is said to dangle.

Incorrect: *Riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

Correct: As Jane was *riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

- In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader!

Incorrect: *Walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: As Jonas was *walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was *walking home at night*.

- In the incorrect sentence *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

Incorrect: To win the spelling bee, Gita and Gerard should join our team.

Correct: If we want to win the spelling bee this year, Gita and Gerard should join our team.

- In the incorrect sentence, *to win the spelling bee* is dangling. Who wants to win the spelling bee? We do!

Tip

The following three steps will help you quickly spot a dangling modifier:

1. Look for an *-ing* modifier at the beginning of your sentence or another modifying phrase:
Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie. (Painting is the *-ing* modifier.)

2. Underline the first noun that follows it:

Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie.

3. Make sure the modifier and noun go together logically. If they do not, it is very likely you have a dangling modifier.

After identifying the dangling modifier, rewrite the sentence.

Painting for three hours at night, Maggie finally finished the kitchen.

Check Your Understanding: Correcting Dangling Modifiers

Correcting Dangling Modifiers (Text Version)

Rewrite the following the sentences on your own sheet of paper to correct the dangling modifiers.

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.

4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

Check your answers:²

Activity source: “11.7: Exercise 2” adapted into H5P activity by Shaima and oeratgc for “[11.7– Misplaced And Dangling Modifiers](#)” In [Communication Essentials for College](#) by Amanda Quibell and Emily Cramer, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#) based on content from “[2.7 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers](#)” In [Writing for Success](#) by University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#).

Check Your Understanding: Rewrite to Correct Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers.

I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

Writing Application

See how creative and humorous you can get by writing ten sentences with misplaced and dangling modifiers. This is a deceptively simple task, but rise to the challenge. Your writing will be stronger for it.

Attributions & References

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Notes

1.
 1. The young lady on the telephone was walking the dog.
 2. I heard on the evening news that there was a robbery.
 3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller that he called “Speed Racer” for the baby.
 4. The explorer stopped the boulder rolling down the mountain with his powerful foot.
 5. We are looking for a babysitter who doesn’t drink or smoke and owns a car for our precious six-year-old.
 6. The teacher served cookies wrapped in aluminum foil to the children.
 7. The mysterious woman holding an umbrella walked toward the car.
 8. We returned the wine that was sour to the waiter.
 9. Driving home from work Charlie spotted a stray puppy.
 10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.
2.
 1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
 2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
 3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
 4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
 5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.

6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

MISPLACED AND DANGLING MODIFIERS: PART 1

Watch It: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers (Part 1)

[Watch Misplaced and dangling modifiers \(part 1\) \(1 min\) on YouTube](#)

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MISPLACED AND DANGLING MODIFIERS: PART 2

Watch It: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers (Part 2)

[Watch Misplaced and dangling modifiers \(part 2\) \(3 min\) on YouTube](#)

Check Your Understanding: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Unit 6: Modifiers – Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers (Text Version)

Learning Outcomes:

1. Examine a variety of sentences containing misplaced or dangling modifiers
2. Identify if a sentence contains a misplaced modifier, a dangling modifier or no modifier errors

Modifiers introduction:

A modifier adds information to an element in a sentence. It can be an adverb, an adjective, a phrases or a clause.

Using modifiers correctly is important to convey a clear message. Incorrect use of modifiers can alter the meaning of a sentence, which can sometimes lead to confusion or unintended humour.

Example: The zombies **almost** ate all of the students' brains.

Almost is the modifier.

Note: The placement of the word “almost” before the verb “ate” implies that the zombie **almost ate** the brains, but then didn't. If we place the word almost *after* the verb, “The zombie ate almost all the students' brains.”, this implies that the zombie ate most of the brains, but left some behind. Do you see the difference? The placement of the word “almost” matters.

Misplaced modifiers:

A **misplaced modifier** is a modifier that is in the wrong place within a sentence. Essentially, it is modifying the wrong word.

In order to fix a misplaced modifier, move it closer to the word it is intended to modify.

Example 1: I showed my arm to the professor **with bite marks**.

Note: Who has the bite marks here? By placing the phrase “with bite marks” after the word “professor”, the sentence implies that it is the **professor** who has the bite marks. Is that the intended meaning?

Example 2: I showed my arm **with bite marks** to the professor.

Note: Now that the phrase “with bite marks” is placed closer to its subject “my arm”, it is clear that the professor is not the one with the bite marks.

Here is another example of a misplaced modifier:

Example 1: Ms. Modifier kept her costume in a drawer **that had been made for her**.

Note: The location of the modifier phrase “that had been made for her” next to the word “drawer” implies that the drawer was made for Ms. Modifier. Is that the intended meaning?

Example 2: Ms. Modifier kept her costume **that had been made for her** in a drawer.

Note: Now that the modifier is moved next to the word “costume”, it is clear that the **costume** was made for Ms Modifier, **not** the drawer.

Dangling modifiers:

A **dangling modifier** means the word to be modified doesn't appear in the sentence.

To fix this problem, add a subject for the modifier to describe.

Example 1: Biking through the courtyard, a zombie appeared.

Note: **Who** is biking? The sentence is missing a subject, so the clause modifier “biking through the courtyard” is confusing.

Example 2: As the student **was biking through the courtyard**, a zombie appeared.

Note: By adding a subject, the student, the modifier makes sense.

Here is another example of a dangling modifier:

Example 1: Entering the cafeteria, a group of zombies were seen.

Note: **Who** is entering the cafeteria? Not the zombies because they're already there. The subject of the modifier is missing.

Example 2: As Ms. Modifier **entered the cafeteria**, she saw a group of zombies.

Note: Now a subject is added with a few other grammatical changes to the sentence. See the difference?

Check your understanding:

Determine if the following sentences contains a misplaced modifier, a dangling modifier, or no modifier errors.

1. While at the library, the lights shone brightly on the zombies between the stacks of books.
 1. misplaced modifier
 2. dangling modifier
 3. no modifier errors

2. The English professor started the lesson at the door while zombies could be heard.
 1. misplaced modifier
 2. dangling modifier
 3. no modifier errors

3. It was up to Ms. Modifier to save everyone from the mass of hungry zombies.
 1. misplaced modifier
 2. dangling modifier
 3. no modifier errors

4. Gathering all the best grammar weapons, the zombie apocalypse was stopped.
 1. misplaced modifier
 2. dangling modifier
 3. no modifier errors

Check your answer¹

Activity source: "[Grammar Lesson: Modifiers](#)" by Krista Ceccolini, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

Summary

In this module, you studied modifiers and how they are often misused in writing. You examined examples of misplaced and dangling modifiers which can change the meaning of a sentence. This may result in some humour, at times, but it may also be confusing to the reader if the modifier is quite distant from the noun it should be describing.

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Notes

- 1) B) The modifier “while at the library” is missing a subject. To make this sentence correct, you could add something like “While Ms. Modifier was at the library...”. 2) A) The modifier “at the door” is in the wrong place. The sentence should read “The English professor started the lesson while zombies could be heard at the door.” 3) C) This sentence contains no modifier errors. 4) B) The modifier “gathering all the best grammar weapons” is missing a subject. You could add something like “As Ms. Modifier gathered all the best grammar weapons...”

PERSON PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

In Unit 1 so far you have practiced run-on sentences and comma use, parallelism, misplaced and/or dangling modifiers, and punctuation. Please continue to use those features and skills in your current writing, and in this module's assignment.

In this module, you will look at person perspective or point of view in writing. It is important to remember that some styles of writing allow for any kind of perspective, but formal, argumentative writing, such as research papers, only suit third person perspective, as the writer is 'removed' from the writing and refrains from giving personal perspectives to remain objective.

Learning Objectives

- Differentiate different person perspectives in writing.
- Change the person perspective in a piece of writing.

To Do List

- Read "Putting the Pieces Together" in *Putting the Pieces Together* to learn about pronouns and point of view.
- Watch the video "First Person vs. Second Person vs. Third Person."
- Read "Point of View in *Advanced English*."
- Complete the Person Perspective Quiz in Blackboard.

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PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER: PRONOUN REVIEW

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like *Bob said that Bob was tired* or *Christina told the class that Christina received an A*. Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

Pronoun Agreement

A **pronoun** is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the **antecedent** of the pronoun.

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted.

- *She* refers to *Lani*.
- *Lani* is the antecedent of *she*.

2. *Jeremy* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work.

- *Him* refers to *Jeremy*.
- *Jeremy* is the antecedent of *him*.

3. *Crina and Rosalie* have been best friends ever since *they* were freshmen in high school.

- *They* refers to *Crina and Rosalie*.
- *Crina and Rosalie* is the antecedent of *they*.

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement. Keep in mind to be more inclusive, the writer can purposefully use the pronoun “they” to refer to a single subject especially if the gender is not known, as assumptions should not be made; instead, the writer would choose to use the pronoun, “they”.

Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular.

Note: this section uses *they* as a plural pronoun to demonstrate incorrect pronoun number agreements. However, *they* can also be used as a singular pronoun (e.g., in cases where someone's personal pronouns are *they/them* or if a person's pronouns cannot be obtained). In your writing, it is advisable to change the singular subject to a plural subject, so they are in agreement in number.

Incorrect: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

Correct: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *he or she* (sing.) must have a receipt.

*If it seems too wordy to use *he or she*, change the antecedent to a plural noun.

Correct: If *students* (plur.) want to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

Agreement in Person

Singular Pronouns

Person	Subject Pronoun	Object Pronoun	Possessive Pronoun
First Person	I	me	my (mine)
Second Person	you	you	your (yours)
Third Person	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its

Plural Pronouns

Person	Subject Pronoun	Object Pronoun	Possessive Pronoun
First Person	we	us	our (ours)
Second Person	you	you	your (your)
Third Person	they	them	their (theirs)

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

Incorrect: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *you* (2nd) should leave a tip.

Correct: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *he or she* (3rd) should leave a tip.

Correct: When *we* (1st) go to a restaurant, *I* (1st) should leave a tip.

Check Your Understanding: Number and Person Agreement

Edit the following paragraph by correcting pronoun agreement errors in number and person.

Over spring break, I visited my older cousin, Diana, and they took me to a butterfly exhibit at a museum. Diana and I have been close ever since she was young. Our mothers are twin sisters, and she is inseparable! Diana knows how much I love butterflies, so it was their special present to me. I have a soft spot for caterpillars too. I love them because something about the way it transforms is so interesting to me. One summer my grandmother gave me a butterfly growing kit, and you got to see the entire life cycle of five Painted Lady butterflies. I even got to set it free. So when my cousin said they wanted to take me to the butterfly exhibit, I was really excited!

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular. The following are some common indefinite pronouns.

Common Indefinite Pronouns

- all
- any
- anybody
- anything
- both
- each
- each one
- each other
- either
- everybody
- everyone
- everything
- few
- many
- neither
- nobody
- none
- no one
- nothing
- one
- one another
- oneself
- other
- others
- several
- some
- somebody

- someone
- something
- anyone

Indefinite pronoun agreement

Incorrect: *Everyone* (sing.) should do what *they* (plur.) can to help.

Correct: *Everyone* (sing.) should do what *he or she* (sing.) can to help.

Incorrect: *Someone* (sing.) left *their* (plur.) backpack in the library.

Correct: *Someone* (sing.) left *his or her* (sing.) backpack in the library.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular. Look over the following examples of collective nouns.

Common Collective Nouns

- audience
- band
- class
- committee
- company
- faculty
- family
- government
- group
- jury
- public
- school
- society
- team
- tribe

Collective noun agreement

Incorrect: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *their* (plur.) annual picnic next week.

Correct: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *its* (sing.) annual picnic next week.

Check Your Understanding: Choosing the correct pronouns

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _____ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _____ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _____ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _____ a smile in return.
5. My family has _____ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train _____ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _____.
8. My mother's singing group has _____ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _____ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _____ way in the storm.

Subject and Object Pronouns

Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. **Object pronouns** function as the object of a verb or of a preposition.

Singular Pronouns

Subject	Object
I	me
you	you
he, she, it	him, her, it

Plural Pronouns

Subject	Object
we	us
you	you
they	them

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

1. *She* loves the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall.
2. Every summer, *they* picked up litter from national parks.

The following sentences show pronouns as objects:

1. Marie leaned over and kissed *him*.
2. Jane moved *it* to the corner.



Tip

Note that a pronoun can also be the object of a preposition.

Near *them*, the children played.

My mother stood between *us*.

The pronouns *us* and *them* are objects of the prepositions *near* and *between*. They answer the questions *near whom?* And *between whom?*

Compound subject pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the subject of the sentence.

The following sentences show pronouns with compound subjects:

Incorrect: *Me and Harriet* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: *Harriet and I* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: Jenna accompanied *Harriet and me* on our trip.

Tip

Note that object pronouns are never used in the subject position. One way to remember this rule is to remove the other subject in a compound subject, leave only the pronoun, and see whether the sentence makes sense. For example, *Me visited the Grand Canyon last summer* sounds immediately incorrect.



Compound object pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the object of the sentence.

Incorrect: I have a good feeling about *Janice and I*.

Correct: I have a good feeling about *Janice and me*.

Tip

It is correct to write *Janice and me*, as opposed to *me and Janice*. Just remember it is more polite to refer to yourself last.



Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

In casual conversation, people sometimes mix up subject and object pronouns. For instance, you might say, “Me and Donnie went to a movie last night.” However, when you are writing or speaking at work or in any other formal situation, you need to remember the distinctions between subject and object pronouns and be able to correct yourself. These subtle grammar corrections will enhance your professional image and reputation.



Check Your Understanding: Correcting Subject and Object Pronoun Use

Revise the following sentences in which the subject and object pronouns are used incorrectly. Copy the revised sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Write a C for each sentence that is correct.

1. Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.
2. She and him have decided to sell their house.
3. Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.
4. Us and our friends have game night the first Thursday of every month.
5. They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.
6. Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.
7. New Year's Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.
8. You exercise much more often than me.
9. I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.
10. The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

Who versus Whom

Who or *whoever* is always the subject of a verb. Use *who* or *whoever* when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

Who won the marathon last Tuesday?

I wonder *who* came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, *whom* and *whomever* serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does *not* perform an action. Use *whom* or *whomever* when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

Whom did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)

From *whom* did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

Tip

If you are having trouble deciding when to use *who* and *whom*, try this trick.

Take the following sentence:

Who/Whom do I consider my best friend?

Reorder the sentence in your head, using either *he* or *him* in place of *who* or *whom*.

I consider *him* my best friend.

I consider *he* my best friend.

Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So, the trick is, if you can use *him* or *her*, you should use *whom*.



Check Your Understanding: Using *Who* and *Whom*

Complete the following sentences by adding *who* or *whom*. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. _____ hit the home run?
2. I remember _____ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _____ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _____ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _____ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _____ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _____ the famous actor was.

8. _____ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _____ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _____ ate the cake mom was saving.

Check Your Understanding: Writing Application

Write about what makes an ideal marriage or long-term relationship. Provide specific details to back up your assertions. After you have written a few paragraphs, go back and proofread your paper for correct pronoun usage.



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POINTS OF VIEW: FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD PERSON VIDEO

Watch It: The Difference between First, Second and Third Person

[Watch First person vs. second person vs. third person- Rebekah Bergman \(5 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Attributions & References

Except where otherwise noted, “Points of View: First, Second, and Third Person video” by Academic and Career Prep, Georgian College is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

POINT OF VIEW

Your voice can't actually be heard when you write, but it can be conveyed through the words you choose, the order you place them in, and the point of view from which you write. When you decide to write something for a specific audience, you often know instinctively what tone of voice will be most appropriate for that audience: serious, professional, funny, friendly, neutral, etc.

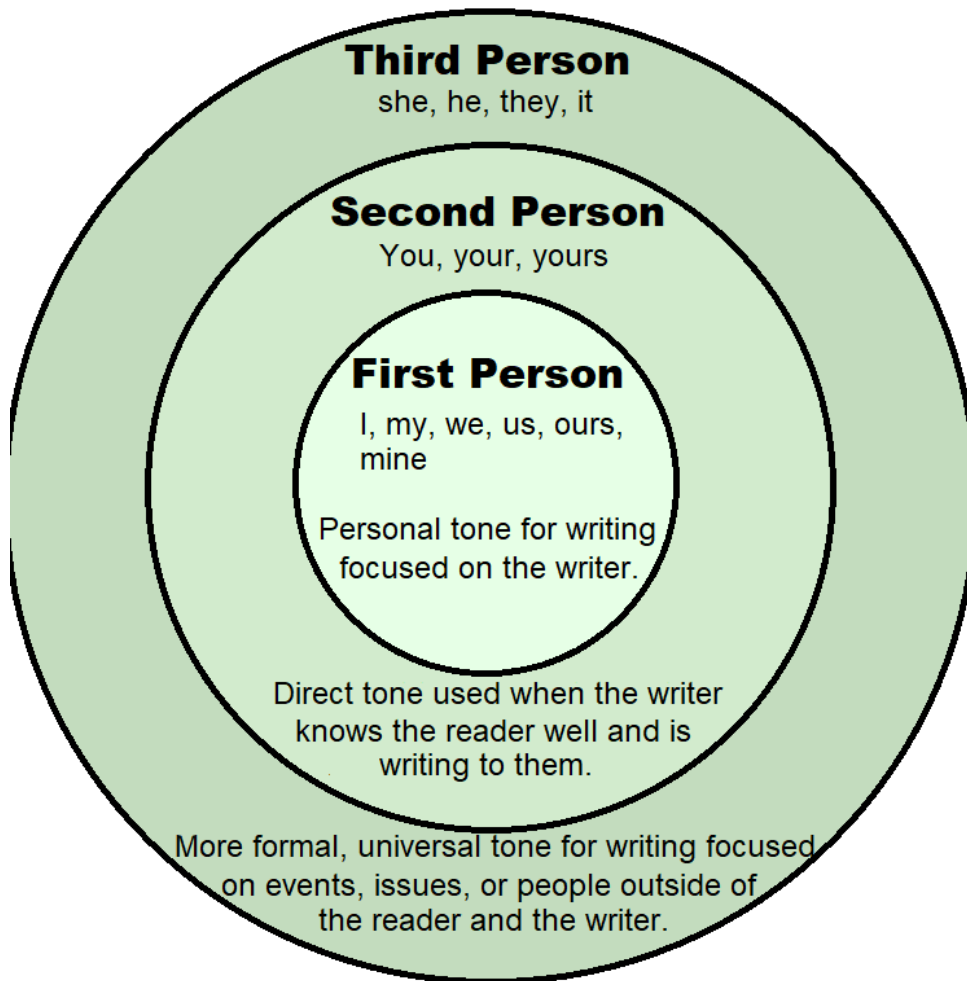
What is Point of View, and How Do I Know Which One to Use?

Point of view can be tricky, so this is a good question. Point of view is the perspective from which you're writing, and it dictates what your focus is. Consider the following examples:

- *I* love watching the leaves change in the fall. (First person point of view)
- *You* will love watching the leaves change colour. (Second person)
- *The leaves* in fall turn many vibrant colours. (Third person)

Which of the above sentences focuses most clearly on the leaves? Third person, right? The first person sentence focuses on what “I” love and the second person sentence focuses on what “you” will love.

- **First person** uses the following pronouns: I, me, my, us, we, myself, our, ours... any words that include the speaker/writer turn the sentence into first person.
- **Second person** uses any form of the word “you,” which has the effect of addressing the reader.
- **Third person** uses pronouns like he, she, it, they, or nouns... any words that direct the reader to a person or thing that is not the writer or reader turn the sentence into third person.



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When is it Okay to Use Each of These Points of View?

Most Common: Third Person

Many of your instructors will ask you to write in third person only and will want you to avoid first or second person. One important reason is that third person point of view focuses on a person or topic outside yourself or the reader, making it the most professional, academic, and objective way to write. The goal of third person point of view is to remove personal, subjective bias from your writing, at least in theory. Most of the writing you will do in academics will require you to focus on ideas, people, and issues outside yourself, so third person will be the most appropriate. This point of view also helps your readers stay focused on the topic instead of thinking about you or themselves.

Occasional: First Person

The point of view you choose to write in will depend on your audience and purpose. If your goal is to relate to your audience in a personal way about a topic that you have experience with, then it may be appropriate to use first person point of view to share your experience and connect with your audience. Otherwise, first person may not be appropriate—especially for the thesis statement. You want to eliminate the first person because it moves the focus to the writer rather than the main point. That weakens the point because it focuses on the least important aspect of the sentence and also because it sounds like a disclaimer. You might say “I think” because you’re not sure, or “I believe” because you want to stress the point that this is only your opinion. Of course, it’s okay to use a disclaimer if you really mean to do so, and it’s also fine to use first person to render personal experience or give an anecdote.

Least Common: Second Person

Second person is used least, especially in academic writing, because most of the time you will not know your audience well enough to write directly to them. The exception is if you’re writing a letter or directing your writing to a very specific group whom you know well.

Notice that this textbook uses second person in this paragraph because it directly addresses you. It is okay to do this because the textbook wants *you* to do specific things, and its audience is reading and writing students.

The danger of using second person is that this point of view can implicate readers in your topic when you don’t mean to do that. If you’re talking about crime rates in your city, and you write something like, “When you break into someone’s house, this affects their property value,” you are literally saying that the reader breaks into people’s houses. Of course, that’s not what you mean. You didn’t intend to implicate the readers this way, but that’s one possible consequence of using second person.

Tip

If you’re having a hard time getting started using third person in an academic essay, use your rough draft to write “I think that” or “I believe” and then delete these phrases in the final draft.

Does anything else affect the tone of your writing?

Many times writers are so focused on the ideas they want to convey that they forget the importance of

something they may never think about: sentence variety. The length of your sentences matters. If you start every sentence with the same words, readers may get bored. If all of your sentences are short and choppy, your writing may sound unsophisticated or rushed. Some short sentences are nice though. They help readers' brains catch up. This is a lot to think about while you're writing your first draft though, so I recommend saving this concern for your second or third draft.

Image Descriptions

Three circles labelled with the three points of view: third person, second person, and first person, and when to use them:

- First person uses the pronouns I, me, us, we, my, ours, and mine, and conveys a personal tone for writing focused on the writer.
- Second person includes you, your, and yours, and conveys a direct tone used when the writer knows the reader well and is writing to them.
- Third person includes she, he, it, they, them, their, and theirs and conveys a more formal and universal tone for writing focused on events, issues, or people outside the reader and writer.

[\[Return to Image\]](#)

Summary

In this module, you looked at points of view or person perspective in writing. You determined that formal, academic writing is better suited to have third person perspective, but other, more creative genres like narrative writing, can use any perspective.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, “Point of View” is adapted from “[18 Point of View](#)” In *Advanced English* by Allison Kilgannon, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). / An adaptation from “[Tone, Voice, and Point of View](#)” in *The Word on College Reading and Writing* by Carol Burnell, Jaime Wood, Monique Babin,

Susan Pesznecker, and Nicole Rosevear, which is licensed under a [CC BY-NC 4.0 Licence](#). Adapted by Allison Kilgannon.

PUNCTUATION

Introduction

Now that you have reviewed misplaced and dangling modifiers in Module 3, you will move on to punctuation in general.

In this module, you will learn about punctuation: semicolons, colons, quotation marks, and apostrophes. If you need to, please review Unit 1, Module 1 for comma use.

Learning Objectives

- Review punctuation rules—apostrophe, comma, semi-colon, and quotation marks.
- Study the use of these punctuation marks.
- Apply accurate punctuation to sentences.

To Do List

- Watch “The 13 Basic Punctuation Rules” Video.
- Read “Semi-Colons” in *Communication Essentials for College* and do the practice exercises.
- Read “Quotes” in *Communication Essentials for College* and do the practice exercises.
- Read “Apostrophes” in *Communication Essentials for College* and do the practice exercises.
- Complete the Punctuation Test in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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BASIC PUNCTUATION RULES

Watch it: Basic Punctuation Rules in English

[Watch 13 Basic punctuation rules in English | Essential writing essential series & punctuation guide \(18 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Attribution & References

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SEMICOLONS

Another punctuation mark that you will encounter is the semicolon (;). Like most punctuation marks, the semicolon can be used in a variety of ways. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but functions differently than a period or a comma. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this represents a good place to pause and take a breath.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence.

Correct: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview; appearances are important.

Choppy: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview. Appearances are important.

Incorrect: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview, appearances are important.

In this case, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list.

Correct: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey; green, brown, and black; or red, green, and brown.

Incorrect: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colors.

Tip:

Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions such as and, or, and but.

Check Your Understanding: Semicolon Placement

Check Your Understanding: Semicolon Placement (Text Version)

Identify whether the given statement has correct semicolon placement or not

1. I did not notice that you were in the office; I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese; or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds; there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.
5. I cannot decide; if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let's go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

Check your answers:¹

Activity source: “12.2: Exercise 1” adapted into H5P activity by Shaima and oeratgc for “[12.2 – Semicolons](#)” In [Communication Essentials for College](#) by Amanda Quibell and Emily Cramer, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#) based on content from “[3.2 Semicolons](#)” In [Writing for Success](#) by University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#).

Summary

- Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses.
- Use a semicolon to separate items in a list when those items already require a comma.

Attribution & References

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Notes

1. 1. True
2. 2. False
3. 3. True
4. 4. True
5. 5. True
6. 6. True

QUOTES

Quotation marks (“ ”) set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Direct Quotations

A direct quotation is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Direct quotation: Carly said, “I’m not ever going back there again.”

Indirect quotation: Carly said that she would never go back there.

Writing at work

Most word processing software is designed to catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While this can be a useful tool, it is better to be well acquainted with the rules of punctuation than to leave the thinking to the computer. Properly punctuated writing will convey your meaning clearly. Consider the subtle shifts in meaning in the following sentences:

- The client said he thought our manuscript was garbage.
- The client said, “He thought our manuscript was garbage.”

The first sentence reads as an indirect quote in which the client does not like the manuscript. But did he actually use the word “garbage”? (This would be alarming!) Or has the speaker paraphrased (and exaggerated) the client’s words?

The second sentence reads as a direct quote from the client. But who is “he” in this sentence? Is it a third party?

Word processing software would not catch this because the sentences are not grammatically incorrect. However, the meanings of the sentences are not the same. Understanding punctuation will help you write what you mean, and in this case, could save a lot of confusion around the office!

Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person’s exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

Beginning: Madison said, “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

Middle: “Let’s stop at the farmers market,” Madison said, “to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

End: “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner,” Madison said.

Speaker not identified: “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote even if it is not the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed *after* commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

Question is part of quoted text: The new employee asked, “When is lunch?”

Question is not part of quoted text: Did you hear her say you were “the next Picasso”?

Exclamation is part of quoted text: My supervisor beamed, “Thanks for all of your hard work!”

Exclamation is not part of quoted text: He said I “single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars”!

Quotations within Quotations

Use single quotation marks (‘ ’) to show a quotation within in a quotation.

Theresa said, “I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, ‘No dogs allowed.’”

“When you say, ‘I can’t help it,’ what exactly does that mean?”

“The instructions say, ‘Tighten the screws one at a time.’”

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and journals, are italicized.

“Annabelle Lee” is one of my favorite romantic poems.

The *Halifax Gazette* has been in publication since 1752.

Writing at Work

In many businesses, the difference between exact wording and a paraphrase is extremely important. For legal purposes, or for the purposes of doing a job correctly, it can be important to know exactly what the client, customer, or supervisor said. Sometimes, important details can be lost when instructions are paraphrased. Use quotes to indicate exact words where needed, and let your coworkers know the source of the quotation (client, customer, peer, etc.).

Check Your Understanding: Applying Quotation Marks

Check Your Understanding: Applying Quotation Marks (Text Version)

Identify whether the given statement has correct quotation marks placement

1. Yasmin said, "I don't feel like cooking. Let's go out to eat."
2. "Where should we go?" said Russell.
3. Yasmin said "it didn't matter to her."
4. "I know", said Russell, "let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar."
5. "Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem?" asked Russell.
6. "I didn't!" exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?
7. The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.
8. Oh! said Yasmin, "Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?"
9. That's the one said Russell."

Check your answers:¹

Activity source: "12.3: Exercise 1" adapted into H5P activity by Shaima and oeratgc for "[12.3 – Quotes](#)" In *Communication Essentials for College* by Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) based on content from "[3.4 Quotes](#)" In *Writing for Success* by University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#).

Summary

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quote within a quote.
- Do not use any quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Attribution & References

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Notes

- | | | | |
|----|---------|----------|----------|
| 1. | 1. True | 4. True | 7. False |
| | 2. True | 5. True | 8. False |
| | 3. True | 6. False | 9. False |

APOSTROPHES

An apostrophe (') is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

An apostrophe and the letter *s* indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add *'s*.

Jen'**s** dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.

The dog'**s** leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Jess'**s** sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in *s* still take the apostrophe *s* (*'s*) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in *s*, just add an apostrophe (*'*). If the plural noun does not end in *s*, add an apostrophe and an *s* (*'s*).

Plural noun that ends in *s*: The drummers'**s** sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.

Plural noun that does not end in *s*: The people'**s** votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

I do not like ice cream.

I **don't** like ice cream.

Notice how the words *do* and *not* have been combined to form the contraction *don't*. The apostrophe shows where the *o* in *not* has been left out.

We will see you later.

We'll see you later.

Look at the chart for some examples of commonly used contractions.

**Common contractions and the
words they combine**

contraction	words combined
aren't	are not
can't	cannot
doesn't	does not
don't	do not
isn't	is not
he'll	he will
I'll	I will
she'll	she will
they'll	they will
you'll	you will
it's	it is, it has
let's	let us
she's	she is, she has
there's	there is, there has
who's	who is, who has

Tip

Be careful not to confuse *it's* with *its*. *It's* is a contraction of the words *it* and *is*. *Its* is a possessive pronoun.

It's cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)

The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words *it is* in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction *it's*.

Check Your Understanding: Adding Apostrophes

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. "What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes."
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

Summary

In this module, you looked at more punctuation use with semicolons, colons, quotation marks, and

apostrophes to further perfect your writing.

The next module focuses on person perspective or point of view in writing.

Attribution & References

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UNIT 2: READING SKILLS

English Degree Entrance Preparation compiled by Carrie Molinski & Sue Slessor.

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Please visit the web version of [English for Degree Entrance Preparation](#) to access the complete book, interactive activities and videos.

Table of Contents

[Reading Strategies](#)

- [Consider Your Reading Environment](#)
- [Navigating Textbooks](#)
- [Critical Reading Skills](#)

[Note-Taking Skills](#)

- [Note-Taking](#)

[Reflection](#)

- [Reflective Writing and Summaries](#)

READING STRATEGIES

Introduction

Why are reading skills important? Well, first off, you will be reading a lot throughout your post-secondary career. Ever read an entire chapter of a textbook only to go to class the next day and have completely forgotten what you read? Developing proper reading strategies will help you retain the information you read, so you will not have to go back and re-read constantly.

Additionally, depending on the kind of job you have, you may also have to do a lot of reading very quickly; for instance, if your job requires any kind of research you will have to sort through hundreds of pages of text in a quick and efficient way. Even outside of your career, you will have to spend time reading emails, letters, manuals if you buy a new appliance or car, and other important documents. The bottom line is that investing in developing proper reading skills now will serve you in both your career and personal life because you will become a more efficient reader.

In this module, you will be provided with a series of reading techniques. As you read, try to think about which methods you have tried in the past, or ones you may wish to try in the future.

Learning Objectives

- Identify a variety of reading strategies including the SQ4R method, annotating, skimming, and scanning.
- Explain how our environment impacts our ability to read.

To Do List

- Read “Consider your Reading Environment” in *Student Success*.
- Read “Critical Reading Skills” in *Student Success*.
- Watch the videos on the SQ4R method.
- Read “Navigating Textbooks” in *Student Success*.
- Watch the videos on annotating, skimming, and scanning.
- Complete the Reading Skills Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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CONSIDER YOUR READING ENVIRONMENT

Now that you've worked up an attitude for success and are feeling motivated, it's time to get organized. You need to organize both your space and your time. This is an essential part of good study skills. It starts with a good studying environment.

Tips for Effective, Individual Study Spaces

Most students more or less take what they can get when it comes to study areas. Schools usually offer a variety of nooks and crannies for students to hunker down and get their assignments done. The school library is a good (and quiet) place. Many common areas elsewhere on campus have tables, chairs, couches, and lounges to accommodate learners. But most students end up doing the majority of their out-of-class work at home.

Home environments may be limited in terms of providing all of the recommended aspects of a good study space, but many of the recommendations can be either implemented or adapted from what a student has on hand or what can be improvised no matter what environment they are living in. Elements conducive to a more effective study/homework experience include such things as good lighting, ample supplies, comfortable seating, adequate space, organization, and personalizing the study area to add a touch of inspiration and motivation.

Space is important for many reasons—some obvious, some less so. People's moods, attitudes, and levels of work productivity change in different spaces. Learning to use space to your own advantage helps get you off to a good start in your studies. Here are a few of the ways space matters:

- **Everyone needs their own space.** This may seem simple, but everyone needs some physical area, regardless of size, that is really their own—even if it's only a small part of a shared space. Within your own space, you generally feel more secure and in control.
- **Physical space reinforces habits.** For example, using your bed primarily for sleeping makes it easier to fall asleep there than elsewhere. It is a bad choice for studying as you are in the habit of relaxing and going to sleep there, so it's harder to stay alert and focused.
- **Different places create different moods.** While this may seem obvious, students don't always use



A messy desk might not be the best for studying. **Source:** [Image by OpenClipart-Vectors](#), used under [Pixabay License](#)

places to their best advantage. One place may be bright and full of energy, with happy students passing through and enjoying themselves—a place that puts you in a good mood. But that may actually make it more difficult to concentrate on your studying. Yet the opposite—a totally quiet, austere place devoid of color and sound and pleasant decorations—can be just as unproductive if it makes you associate studying with something unpleasant. You will need to discover what space works best for you and then let that space reinforce good study habits.

Use Space to Your Advantage and to Avoid Distractions

Begin by analyzing your needs, preferences, and past problems with places for studying. Where do you usually study? What are the best things about that place for studying? What distractions are most likely to occur there?

The goal is to find, or create, the best place for studying, and then to use it regularly so that studying there becomes a good habit.

- **Choose a place you can associate with studying.** Make sure it's not a place already associated with other activities (eating, watching television, sleeping, etc.). Over time, the more often you study in this space, the stronger will be its association with studying, so that eventually you'll be completely focused as soon as you reach that place and begin.
- **Your study area should be available whenever you need it.** If you want to use your home, apartment, or dorm room but you never know if another person may be there and possibly distract you, then it's probably better to look for another place, such as a study lounge or an area in the library. Look for locations open at the hours when you may be studying. You may also need two study spaces—one in or near where you live, another on campus. Sometimes you have to make do depending on circumstances. For example, you have an hour free between two classes, and your regular study areas are too far away to use for only an hour. Look for a convenient study place nearby such as a cafeteria or student lounge.



Choose a pleasant, quiet place for studying, such as the school library. **Source:** “[Students Study in 4 West](#)” by [clemsunivlibrary](#), licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#).

- **Your study space should meet your study needs.** An open desk or table surface usually works best for writing, and you'll tire quickly if you try to write notes sitting in an easy chair (which might also make you sleepy). You need good light for reading, to avoid tiring from eyestrain. If you use a laptop for writing notes or reading and researching, you need a power outlet so you don't have to stop when your battery runs out.
- **Your study space should meet your psychological needs.** Some students may need total silence with absolutely no visual distractions; they may find a perfect study carrel hidden away on the fifth floor in the library. Other students may be unable to concentrate for long without looking up from reading and momentarily letting their eyes move over a pleasant scene. Some students may find it easier to stay motivated when surrounded by other students also studying; they may find an open space in the library or a study lounge with many tables spread out over an area. Experiment to find the setting that works best for you—and remember that the more often you use *this same space*, the more comfortable and effective your studying will become.
- **You may need the support of others to maintain your study space.** Students living at home, whether with a spouse and children or with their parents, often need the support of family members to maintain an effective study space. The kitchen table probably isn't best if others pass by frequently. Be creative, if necessary, and set up a card table in a quiet corner of your bedroom or elsewhere to avoid interruptions. Put a “do not disturb” sign on your door.
- **Keep your space organized and free of distractions.** You want to prevent sudden impulses to neaten up the area (when you should be studying), do laundry, wash dishes, and so on. Unplug a nearby telephone, turn off your cell phone, and use your computer only as needed for studying. If your email or message program pops up a notice every time an email or message arrives, turn off your notifications, turn off your Wi-Fi, or detach the network cable to prevent those intrusions.
- **Plan for breaks.** Everyone needs to take a break occasionally when studying. Think about the space you're in and how to use it when you need a break. If in your home, stop and do a few exercises to get your blood flowing. If in the library, take a walk up a couple flights of stairs and around the stacks before returning to your study area.
- **Prepare for human interruptions.** Even if you hide in the library to study, there's a chance a friend may happen by. At home with family members or in a dorm room or common space, the odds increase greatly. Have a plan ready in case someone pops in and asks you to join them in some fun activity. Know when you plan to finish your studying so that you can make a plan for later—or for tomorrow at a set time.

The Distractions of Technology

Multitasking is the term commonly used for being engaged in two or more different activities at the same time, usually referring to activities using devices such as cell phones, smartphones, computers, and so on.

Many people claim to be able to do as many as four or five things simultaneously, such as writing an email while responding to an instant message (IM) and reading a tweet, all while watching a video on their computer monitor or talking on the phone. Many people who have grown up with computers consider this kind of multitasking a normal way to get things done, including studying. Even people in business sometimes speak of multitasking as an essential component of today's fast-paced world.

Watch It: Why the Human Brain Can't Multitask

[Watch Why the human brain can't multitask \(length 2:39\) on YouTube](#)

It is true that *some* things can be attended to while you're doing something else, such as checking email while you watch television news—but only when none of those things demands your full attention. You can concentrate 80 percent on the email, for example, while 20 percent of your attention is listening for something on the news that catches your attention. Then you turn to the television for a minute, watch that segment, and go back to the email. But you're not actually watching the television *at the same time that* you're composing the email—you're rapidly going back and forth. In reality, the mind can focus only on one thing at any given moment. Even things that don't require much thinking are severely impacted by multitasking, such as driving while talking on a cell phone or texting. An astonishing number of people end up in the emergency room from just trying to walk down the sidewalk while texting; it is a common occurrence for people to walk into a pole or parked car while multitasking.

“Okay,” you might be thinking, “why should it matter if I write my paper first and then answer emails or do them back and forth at the same time?” **It actually takes you longer to do two or more things at the same time than if you do them separately**—at least with anything that you actually have to focus on, such as studying. That's true because each time you go back to studying after looking away to a message or tweet, it takes time for your mind to shift gears to get back to where you were. Every time your attention shifts, add up some more “downtime”—and pretty soon it's evident that multi-tasking is costing you a lot more time than you think. And that's assuming that your mind *does* fully shift back to where you were every time, without losing your train of thought or forgetting an important detail. It doesn't always.

The other problem with multi-tasking is the effect it can have on the attention span—and even on how the brain works. Research has shown that in people who constantly shift their attention from one thing to another in short bursts, the brain forms patterns that make it more difficult to keep sustained attention on any one thing. So, when you really do need to concentrate for a while on one thing, such as when studying for

a big test, it becomes more difficult to do even if you're not multitasking at that time. It's as if your mind makes a habit of wandering from one thing to another and then can't stop.

So, stay away from multitasking whenever you have something important to do, like studying. If it's already a habit for you, don't let it become worse. Manipulate your study space to prevent the temptations altogether. Turn your computer off—or shut down email and messaging programs if you need the computer for studying. Turn your cell phone off—if you just tell yourself not to answer it but still glance at it each time to see who sent or left a message, you're still losing your studying momentum and have to start over again. For those who are really addicted to technology (you know who you are!), go to the library and don't take your laptop or cell phone.

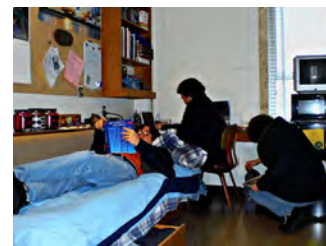
Some students use effective time management strategies, including scheduling breaks in your study periods, usually for a few minutes every hour. If you're really hooked on checking for messages, plan to do that at scheduled times.

What about listening to music while studying? Some don't consider that multitasking, and many students say they can listen to music without it affecting their studying. Studies are inconclusive about the positive or negative effects of music on people's ability to concentrate, probably because so many different factors are involved. But there's a huge difference between listening to your favourite CD and spontaneously singing along with some of the songs and enjoying soft background music that enhances your study space the same way as good lighting and pleasant decor. Some people can study better with low-volume instrumental music that relaxes them and does not intrude on their thinking, while others can concentrate only in silence. And some are so used to being immersed in music and the sounds of life that they find *total* silence more distracting—such people can often study well in places where people are moving around. The key thing is to be honest with yourself: if you're *actively* listening to music while you're studying, then you're likely not studying as well as you could be. It will take you longer and lead to less successful results.

Family and Roommate Issues

Sometimes going to the library or elsewhere is not practical for studying, and you have to find a way to cope in a shared space.

Part of the solution is time management. Agree with others on certain times that will be reserved for studying; agree to keep the place quiet, not to have guests visiting, and to prevent other distractions. These arrangements can be made with a roommate, spouse, and older children. If there are younger children in your household and you have child-care responsibility, it's usually more complicated. You may have to schedule your studying during their nap time or find quiet activities for them to enjoy while you study. Try to spend some time with your kids before you study, so they don't feel like you're ignoring them.



Multitasking makes studying much less effective. Try to find a learning environment that is free of distractions. **Source:** “Multitasking” by Benton Greene, licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

The key is to plan ahead. You don't want to find yourself, the night before an exam, in a place that offers no space for studying.

Finally, accept that sometimes you'll just have to say no. If your roommate or a friend often tries to engage you in conversation or suggests doing something else when you need to study, just say no. Learn to be firm but polite as you explain that you just *really* have to get your work done first. Students who live at home may also have to learn how to say no to parents or family members—just be sure to explain the importance of the studying you need to do. Remember, you can't be everything to everyone all the time.

Check Your Understanding: Learning Environment—Home Study Area

1. Consider your current study area at home—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Be thorough.
2. List as many ways you think you can realistically improve, change, or start from scratch with your study area. Remember, you might not have the advantage of a whole room, or even a corner of a room, but there are still some changes you can make to create a more effective study environment.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this section is adapted from “[5.1 Learning Environment](#)” In *Student Success* by Mary Shier, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). / An adaptation of:

- “[Organizing Your Space](#)” in *University Success* by N. Mahoney, B. Klassen, and M. D'Eon. Adapted by Mary Shier. [CC BY-NC-SA](#).
- The first two paragraphs after the “Tips for Effective, Individual Study Spaces” heading are from “[The Basics of Study Skills](#)” in *Blueprint for Success in College and Career* by Dave Dillon. [CC BY](#).
- Alterations include removing Exercise: Learning Environment and renaming Exercise: Learning Environment-Home Study to Activity.

NAVIGATING TEXTBOOKS

Often when presented with the textbook for a course, you may find it a little overwhelming. The textbook can be large with a lot of information in it. Students can feel a little defeated even before they start. They may have questions like, “Will I need to know everything in this book?” or “Will I be able to understand it?” or even “When will I have time to read all this?” Rest assured, it is likely much better than it might seem at first. Often you are only asked to read and deal with certain parts of the textbook, as opposed to the whole thing, so make sure to read your instructions carefully. Many students have ended up reading chapters that weren’t required for the course.

Furthermore, there are many strategies that are helpful for navigating your textbook. Knowing the layout of your text can help you locate information easily, identify important information, and aid in reviewing and summarizing material. Here are some useful tips.

Front and Back Matter

Before diving into every line of text in a textbook reading assignment, it is helpful (and saves time) to find out first what resources the entire book has to offer you. Then, as those chapter readings are assigned, it helps to first skim read them for the big picture meaning.

The first exercise in this chapter will help you find all the resources in your textbook, and some textbooks have a lot more help in the front matter and back matter of the text than you may realize. One student who, when given this exercise to use on any textbook he had with him, picked his math book. He was at that time re-taking that math class because he had failed it the term before. As he did the exercise, he realized the back matter of the book included an answer key for half of the problems for every exercise. “Had I known this last term,” he said, “I would have passed!” He would have been able to check his answers and see when he didn’t understand a concept. See if you, too, find something useful in your textbook that perhaps you didn’t know was there, either.

The exercises in this chapter cover strategies for skim-reading specific chapters and a strategy for getting the most out of graphics included in textbooks.

Front and Back Matter of a Textbook

Here is a list of several kinds of resources typically in the front of a textbook, known as “front matter,” and a list of typical “back matter” resources. Check one of your textbooks to see how many of these elements are present.

Textbook title:

Front Matter

- Table of Contents
- Preface
- Introduction
- To the Teacher
- To the Student
- Other (list, here):

Back Matter

- Glossary of Terms
- Index of subjects
- Answer Keys
- Additional Exercises
- Additional Readings
- Tables, graphs, charts
- Maps
- Other (list, here):

Annotating Strategies

Watch It: Critical Reading Strategies

[Watch Critical Reading Strategies \(7 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Skim-Reading Textbook Chapters

Before doing a detailed reading of a textbook chapter, get the big picture by following these steps:

- Similar to reading the Table of Contents for the entire book, read the Introduction or Chapter Overview, whichever the textbook features, for the main ideas and how they are divided.
- Read the headings and subheadings.
- Note the graphics (charts, tables, illustrations, etc.).
- Read the first one or two sentences in the paragraphs (the paragraph topic is sometimes covered in more than one sentence).
- Read the last sentence in each paragraph, which might be a paragraph summary.
- Read the summary of the entire chapter, if given.
- Read any sentence with boldface or italicized words or word groups in it (usually key ideas or technical terms).
- Stop when necessary if you come across a complicated idea or topic and take a little more time to skim it until you understand it.
- Skim the study questions, too. They will help you focus on key points.

Watch It: Skimming & Scanning

Watch It: Skimming & Scanning (Text Version)

Watch the following videos to learn more about skimming and scanning reading strategies:

[Watch Reading strategy: Skimming \(7 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Reading strategy: Scanning \(6 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

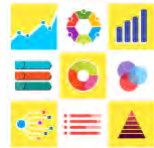
Source: “Reading Strategies – Skimming & Scanning” H5P activity by Jessica Jones and oeratgc licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#), except where otherwise noted.

Reading Graphics

Graphics provide a visual way of conveying information. Listed below are various types of data found on most graphics, whether a pie chart, bar graph, line chart, or other type.

The key to comprehending graphics and using them to get more meaning from a textbook chapter or an article, or to answer study questions, is to pay close attention to the typical elements of the graphic. A graphic may include the following elements:

- Title
- Captions
- Legend
- Axis information (vertical information, or “Y” data, and horizontal information, or “X” data)
- Publication date (important for the most current information)
- Publisher (important for credibility)
- Labels
- Color (used to differentiate and compare data)
- Size (also used to represent comparisons)
- Spatial positions (helps for comparing and contrasting)
- Patterns represented by the content itself



Graphics convey information visually.

Source: [Photo by 200 Degrees](#), used under [Pixabay License](#)

- Trends that appear more evident when viewing the visual representation of the data

Anatomy of a Textbook

Good textbooks are designed to help you learn, not just to present information. They differ from other types of academic publications intended to present research findings, advance new ideas, or deeply examine a specific subject. Textbooks have many features worth exploring because they can help you understand your reading better and learn more effectively. In your textbooks, look for the elements listed in the table below.

Textbook sections

Textbook Feature	What It Is	Why You Might Find It Helpful
Preface or Introduction	A section at the beginning of a book in which the author or editor outlines its purpose and scope, acknowledges individuals who helped prepare the book, and perhaps outlines the features of the book.	You will gain perspective on the author's point of view, what the author considers important. If the preface is written with the student in mind, it will also give you guidance on how to "use" the textbook and its features.
Foreword	A section at the beginning of the book, often written by an expert in the subject matter (different from the author) endorsing the author's work and explaining why the work is significant.	A foreword will give you an idea about what makes this book different from others in the field. It may provide hints as to why your instructor selected the book for your course.
Author Profile	A short biography of the author illustrating the author's credibility in the subject matter.	This will help you understand the author's perspective and what the author considers important. It will also give you an idea about the author's credibility on the topic.
Table of Contents	A listing of all the chapters in the book and, in most cases, primary sections within chapters.	The table of contents is an outline of the entire book. It will be very helpful in establishing links among the text, the course objectives, and the syllabus. It's also a quick reference to finding specific chapters.
Chapter Preview or Learning Objectives	A section at the beginning of each chapter in which the author outlines what will be covered in the chapter and what the student should expect to know or be able to do at the end of the chapter.	These sections are invaluable for determining what you should pay special attention to. Be sure to compare these outcomes with the objectives stated in the course syllabus. They are also a good reference for review before a test.
Introduction	The first paragraph(s) of a chapter, which states the chapter's objectives and key themes. An introduction is also common at the beginning of primary chapter sections.	Introductions to chapters or sections are "must reads" because they give you a road map to the material you are about to read, pointing you to what is truly important in the chapter or section.
Applied Practice Elements	Exercises, activities, or drills designed to let students apply their knowledge gained from the reading. Some of these features may be presented via websites designed to supplement the text.	These features provide you with a great way to confirm your understanding of the material. If you have trouble with them, you should go back and reread the section. They also have the additional benefit of improving your recall of the material.
Chapter Summary	A section at the end of a chapter that confirms key ideas presented in the chapter.	It is a good idea to read this section before you read the body of the chapter. It will help you strategize about where you should invest your reading effort. It is also invaluable when reviewing for a test.
Review Material	A section at the end of the chapter that includes additional applied practice exercises, review questions, and suggestions for further reading.	The review questions will help you confirm your understanding of the material.

Textbook Feature	What It Is	Why You Might Find It Helpful
Glossary of Terms	Textbooks often highlight or bold new terms. Glossaries are usually at the back of textbooks and give definitions and explanations of important terms in the text.	Many students overlook the usefulness of glossaries. They aid comprehension when you are reading and come across terms you don't know or don't remember the meaning of. They are also extremely useful when doing assignments and the question is unclear or you are looking for clues in order to proceed.
Index	Located in the back matter of a text, it gives page numbers that content is located in.	This is probably one of the most useful, yet most underused sections of a text. Anytime you need to look up a concept in the text, don't waste time flipping through the text looking for a section you're sure you'll recognize. Go straight to the index and it will lead you directly to what you're looking for. It is especially useful when doing assignments.
Answer Keys	Many exercises in the text have answer keys or partial answer keys at the back of the book (or at the back of individual chapters).	Whenever doing exercises or practice problems, make sure you are doing them correctly by continually checking your answers. It's important to know if you're on the right track.
Additional Exercises	Many texts offer extra practice.	For topics that you don't feel you have a firm understanding in, extra practice helps solidify concepts.
Additional Readings and Resources	Additional resources offer extra information about topics.	These are useful if you want more information for your own interest, or if you are doing an assignment or research paper on one of the topics from your textbook.
Endnotes and Bibliographies	Formal citations of sources used to prepare the text.	These will help you infer the author's biases and are also valuable if doing further research on the subject for a paper.

Why and How to Read the Textbook

You probably already know that you should read your textbooks. However, if you are like many students, reading textbooks might take second place to other priorities, such as attending class and completing assignments. Perhaps it may not seem clear how committing time to weekly reading will support you in achieving your learning goals. But there are strong reasons for committing to regular reading.

Reading textbooks helps you get the most out of your class time. This is especially true if you are able to read your textbook before going to class. Why? Because if you are hearing a lot of material in a lecture for the very first time, it can often be difficult to take good notes and understand how all of the concepts fit together. If you read your textbook before you go to class, you will already have a general understanding of the most important topics in that unit. You will already know some of the key words, and you will have a good idea of what you already understand well and what you might not quite understand yet. That way, when you go to class, your instructor's lecture will support and strengthen the things that you're already

starting to learn. You'll be equipped to ask good questions and to participate well in class. Overall, you will get more out of the time you spend in class.

You become a better reader by reading. Learning to read textbooks well prepares you to read other complex material that you will encounter throughout your studies and later on in your career. Reading efficiently is a skill that you will use throughout your life—not just in your current classes.

Author's Story: Using the Index

I can't count the number of times the following scenario has played out.

A student comes to me exasperated. The student is trying to complete a homework assignment question but can't find the relevant information in the textbook that would help with the question. The student starts flipping through the pages of the text saying they've looked everywhere for the information but can't find it. They are either convinced it's not there, or they insist they've seen it in there before but now it's nowhere to be found. They continually flip as they explain how frustrated they are.

I ask them what they are looking for. They explain. I use the key words that they used to explain and look up those key words in the index of the textbook. It gives the page numbers of all the places in the text that are referenced to these key concepts. I choose the one that is in the chapter that they are currently working on. Then there it is. They are so amazed, and yet this is just the simple concept of remembering to use the index—a wonderful feature in the back matter of the textbook!

—Mary Shier, College of the Rockies

When you engage in reading your textbook, think about the following seven reading principles.

The Seven Reading Principles

Read the assigned material. I know this sounds like a no-brainer, but you might be surprised to learn how many students don't read the assigned material. Often, it takes longer to read the material than anticipated. Sometimes it is not interesting material to us and we procrastinate reading it. Sometimes we're busy and it is just not a priority. It makes it difficult to learn the information your instructor wants you to learn if you do not read about it before coming to class.

Read it when assigned. This is almost as big a problem for students as the first principle. You will benefit exponentially from reading assignments when they are assigned (which usually means reading them before the instructor lectures on them). If there is a date for a reading on your syllabus, finish reading it before that

date. The background knowledge you will attain from reading the information will help you learn and connect information when your instructor lectures on it, and it will leave you better prepared for class discussions. Further, if your instructor assigns you 70 pages to read by next week, don't wait until the night before to read it all. Break it down into chunks. Try scheduling time each day to read ten or so pages. It takes discipline and self-control but doing it this way will make understanding and remembering what you read much easier.

Take notes when you read. Hermann Ebbinghaus is a researcher who determined that 42% of information we take in is lost after only 20 minutes without review. For the same reasons that it's important to take notes during lectures, it's important to take notes when you are reading. Your notes will help you concentrate, remember and review.

Relate the information to you. We remember information that we deem is important. The strategy then is to make what you are studying important to you. Find a way to directly relate what you are studying to something in your life. Sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is not. But if your attitude is "I will never use this information" and "it's not important," chances are good that you will not remember it.

Read with a dictionary or use an online dictionary. Especially with information that is new to us, we may not always recognize all the words in a textbook or their meanings. If you read without a dictionary and you don't know what a word means, you probably still won't know what it means when you finish reading. Students who read with a dictionary (or who look the word up online) expand their vocabulary and have a better understanding of the text. Take the time to look up words you do not know. Another strategy is to try to determine definitions of unknown words by context, thus eliminating the interruption to look up words.

Ask a classmate or instructor when you have questions or if there are concepts you do not understand. Visiting instructors during their office hours is one of the most underutilized college resources. Some students may be shy about going, which is understandable, but ultimately, it's your experience, and it's up to you if you want to make the most of it. If you go, you will get answers to your questions; at the same time, you'll demonstrate to your instructor that their course is important to you. Find out when your professor's office hours are (they are often listed in the syllabus), ask before or after class or email your professor to find out. Be polite and respectful.

Read it again. Some students will benefit from reading the material a second or third time, as it allows them to better understand the material. The students who understand the material the best usually score the highest on exams. It may be especially helpful to reread the chapter just after the instructor has lectured on it.

Reading your textbook and knowing how to navigate your textbook and use it as a useful resource can make a significant difference in your learning. You will discover that textbooks are your friends.

Watch It: Reading Assignments

[Watch Reading assignments: Crash Course study skills #2 \(10 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this section is adapted from “[5.3 Navigate Textbooks](#)” In *Student Success* by Mary Shier, licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)./ An adaptation of:

- “Front and Back Matter,” “Exercise 5.3.1,” “Skim Reading Textbook Chapters,” and “Reading Graphics” were adapted from “[Getting the Most Out of Your Textbooks](#)” in *Blueprint for Success in College and Career* by Phyllis Nissila. Adapted by Mary Shier. [CC BY](#).
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- Text under “Why and How to Read the Textbook” was adapted from “[Set Your Purpose for Reading Textbooks](#)” in *University 101: Study, Strategize and Succeed* by Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Adapted by Mary Shier. [CC BY-SA](#).
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- Alterations include removing exercises and adding videos on annotating, scanning, and skimming.

CRITICAL READING SKILLS



Reading for joy and learning. **Source:** [Photo by Hermann Traube](#), used under [Pixabay License](#)

reading and comprehension skills so far. Other students for whom reading has mostly consisted of social media, texts, forum chat rooms, and emails, find they are intimidated by the sheer amount of reading there is in college classes.

Learning to read critically is an important part of developing good study habits, and ultimately strong reading skills will enhance almost every area of your life.

Most students entering college have not yet dealt with the level of difficulty involved in reading—and comprehending—scholarly textbooks and articles. The challenge may even surprise some who have pretty good

What is Reading Comprehension?

Reading comprehension is defined as the level of understanding of a message. In other words, how well do you understand what you read? This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the written message. Comprehension is a “creative, multi-faceted process” dependent upon four language skills: phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Proficient reading depends on the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly. It is also determined by an individual’s cognitive development, which is “the construction of thought processes”. Reading comprehension involves both the ability to decode (figure out) words (i.e., know what the words are) and also the ability to make meaning of the words strung together (comprehension). Some people learn through education or instruction and others through direct experiences.

There are specific traits that determine how successfully an individual will comprehend text, including prior knowledge about the subject, well-developed language, and the ability to make inferences. Having the skill to monitor comprehension is a factor: “Why is this important?” and “Do I need to read the entire text?” are examples. Another trait is the ability to be self-correcting, which allows for solutions to comprehension challenges.

Vocabulary

Reading comprehension and vocabulary are inextricably linked. The ability to decode or identify and

pronounce words is self-evidently important, but knowing what the words mean has a major and direct effect on knowing what any specific passage means. Students with a smaller vocabulary than other students comprehend less of what they read, and it has been suggested that the most impactful way to improve comprehension is to improve vocabulary.

Most words are learned gradually through a wide variety of environments: television, books, and conversations. Some words are more complex and difficult to learn, such as homonyms (words that have multiple meanings) and those with figurative meanings, like idioms, similes, and metaphors.

Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal teaching requires students to predict, summarize, clarify, and ask questions for sections of a text. The use of strategies like summarizing after each paragraph have come to be seen as effective strategies for building students' comprehension. The idea is that students will develop stronger reading comprehension skills on their own if the teacher gives them explicit mental tools for unpacking text.

Instructional Conversations

“Instructional conversations”, or comprehension through discussion, creates higher-level thinking opportunities for students by promoting critical and aesthetic thinking about the text. There are several types of questions to focus on: remembering; testing understanding; application or solving; synthesis or creating; and evaluation and judging. It is helpful to use these types of questions through “think-alouds” before, during, and after reading a text. When a student can relate a passage to an experience, another book, or other facts about the world, they are “making a connection”. Making connections helps students understand the author’s purpose in a fiction or non-fiction story.



Instructional conversations create higher-level thinking opportunities for students. **Source:** “[Classroom help](#)” by Mary Shier is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

Text Factors

There are factors that, once discerned, make it easier for the reader to understand the written text. One is the genre, like folktales, historical fiction, biographies or poetry. Each genre has its own characteristics for text

structure that, once understood, help the reader comprehend it. A story is composed of a plot, characters, setting, point of view, and theme. Informational books provide real world knowledge for students and have unique features such as: headings, maps, vocabulary, and an index. Poems are written in different forms and the most commonly used are: rhymed verse, haiku, free verse, and narratives. Poetry uses devices such as: alliteration, repetition, rhyme, metaphors, and similes. Students who are familiar with genres, organizational patterns, and text features in books they read are better able to create those text factors in their own writing.

The SQ3R Strategy

The SQ3R method has been a popular method of reading to learn. Textbooks require different reading methods than you might use for a novel, magazine, or website. When you approach a textbook, you are using it as a tool to learn the material that you need to know for your course. To achieve your aims, you will want to read with a purpose. One method for reading purposefully is called SQ3R. The acronym SQ3R reminds you of the elements of this reading method—Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review—that will help you become a more effective reader.



Source: “SQ3R Strategy” by Rawia Inaim is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Survey

Before diving in to read the chapter, look over some of the key aspects.

- Survey the title: think about what you may already know about that topic.
- Survey the introduction: it gives you an idea about how the chapter is organized, and what you will be learning. If your chapter includes a list of Learning Objectives, you will want to pay particular attention to these. The Learning Objectives outline the key content you will want to master as a result of your reading.
- Survey anything in bold: subtitles are labels. Other bolded items may be definitions that you will need to know.
- Survey the pictures, charts and graphs: glance at these to pick out things that seem interesting or informative.
- Survey the summary at the end: this will review and give you the key points in the chapter.
- Survey the questions at the end of the chapter: these will help focus your attention on the main points.
- Survey your course syllabus/course presentation and see what topics the instructor is focusing on.

Question

When you have completed your survey, you will begin reading, focusing especially on items that you identified as important when you survey. Think of questions you would like to see answered in the chapter. Think of “Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How”, the five W’s and H questions, for each subtitle or definition (you can do this as you progress through the reading). These questions will become the headings in your notes.

Read

Read the chapter. Read to answer the questions you have created. Reread captions under pictures, graphs, and visuals. Note all underlined, italicized, and bolded words or phrases. Stop and reread parts that aren’t clear. Once you have found the key information needed, move to the next step.

Recite

Recite the answer to your question out loud. Do this as if you are explaining to a study partner. Better yet, actually explain it to a study partner, family member, or friend who is interested in supporting you. Explaining it to someone else helps you understand it better yourself.

- After reciting, write this information down.
- Repeat this step for each question that you created.

Review

Stand back and look at the chapter as a whole.

- How do the ideas and facts you learned from each subsection fit together?
- Review your notes to be sure they make sense to you

*Some teachers and students add a fourth R, *Reflect*, as you’ll see when you watch the videos in the next Check Your Understanding.

Watch It: How to Use the SQ4R Reading Technique

Watch It: SQ4R (Text Version)

Watch the following two videos to learn more about the SQ4R reading technique:

[Watch How to use the SQ4R reading technique \(2 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Effective Reading with SQ4R \(6 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Source: “Critical Reading Skills: SQ4R” H5P activity by Jessica Jones and oeratgc licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#), except where otherwise noted.

KWL Reading Strategy

KWL is a method that can guide you in reading and understanding a text. You can do it working alone, but discussions definitely help. It is composed of only three stages which can be reflected on a worksheet of three columns with the three labels:

1. What we **Know**
2. What we **Want to Know**
3. What we **Learned**

K stands for *Know*

Think first about what you already know about the topic before reading and jot it down in the first column, marked *K*. Discuss with others if possible.

W stands for *Want to know*

In the *W* column list the things you want to learn about the topic. Record questions, thinking of the five *W*'s and *H* questions. These questions will help you focus your attention during reading.

L stands for *Learned*

The final stage is to answer your questions, as well as to list what new information you have learned. You can do this either while reading or after you have finished.

Check Your Understanding: KWL Reading Method

Try using the KWL method on a simple task that you would like to know more about. For example, how to make a great cup of coffee, how to make a delicious margarita, information about a medical issue someone you know has been diagnosed with, tips for painting a bedroom—anything you like.

The Reading Apprenticeship (RA) Approach to Comprehension

Reading Apprenticeship is based on the premise that people who have become expert readers can assist learners by modeling what they have learned to do. The idea is that a more proficient reader is present to support the beginner, engaging the beginner in the activity and calling attention to often overlooked or hidden strategies.

This strategy takes a metacognitive approach to comprehension, utilizing various strategies readers may already know how to do, then adding more. For example, most readers have learned to make predictions, ask questions concerning meanings (“I wonder about...”), visualize a scene being described, associate the material being read to some other material and, at the end, summarize the material. By reading together, the more experienced reader walks the beginner through the process by leading them through similar processes.

Now review and affirm important comprehension skills you already possess and complete the exercise below.

Check Your Understanding: Reading Apprenticeship Approach

Go back through the excerpt above on reading comprehension and this time, write marginal notes where you used any of the comprehension tools listed below:

- **Predicting**—guessing what the author would write next.
- **Asking questions** of the material such as, “I wonder about,” or “Could this mean?”
- **Visualizing**—trying to picture it in your mind.
- **Connecting** this material to something else you have learned—“It’s like...”
- **Noting** where you think you might need to read something over again for comprehension. This is important! It’s not a weakness to read things over several times to understand them!
- **Summarizing**—excellent for testing to see if you really understood the main point of the reading.

Summary

In this module you have learned the following:

- How our environment impacts our ability to read.
- Key strategies to increase reading comprehension include practices such as discussion, reciprocal teaching, questioning, and summarizing.
- Text factors such as genres, literary features, organizational patterns, and text features such as headings, maps, charts, and indexes—all aid comprehension.
- A variety of reading strategies including the SQ4R method, annotating, skimming, and scanning.

Attribution & References

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- The first paragraph and text under “What is Reading Comprehension” has been adapted from “[Comprehending College Level Reading by Using the Reading Apprenticeship Approach](#)” in *Blueprint for Success in College and Career* by Phyllis Nissila. Adapted by Mary Shier. [CC BY](#).
- Text under the “The SQ3R Strategy” heading was adapted from “[Read with a Purpose: The SQ3R Strategy](#)” in *University 101: Study, Strategize and Succeed* by Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Adapted by Mary Shier. [CC BY-SA](#).
- Alterations include removing Exercise on SQ4R and including two videos. Exercises were renamed as activities.

NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

Introduction

Now that you have spent some time exploring different reading techniques, it is time to talk about note-taking strategies. As you read, you will often want to take notes to reference later. Note-taking is a useful skill that you will want to employ in a variety of settings.

For instance, as a student you will want to develop good note-taking strategies to clarify content and study for tests. In your personal life, you may have to leave a note for someone with follow up instructions, or to jot down something important someone said to relay a message. At work you may have to take notes on prospective clients and recount conversations or training when you are on the job site. Whatever the reason, note-taking is an important skill that you will definitely want to develop as you move throughout your career.

Learning Objectives

- Explain how note-taking supports learning and can be used as an additional learning tool while you read.
- Explore a variety of note-taking techniques, including the list, outline, Cornell and mind mapping methods.

To Do List

- Read “Note-Taking” in *Student Success*.
- Watch the Video, “Taking Notes: Crash Course Study Skills #1.”
- Complete the “Note-Taking” Learning Activity.
- Complete the Note-Taking Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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NOTE-TAKING

You've got the PowerPoint slides for your lecture, and the information in your textbook. Do you need to take notes as well?

Despite the vast amount of information available in electronic formats, taking notes is an important learning strategy. In addition, the way that you take notes matters, and not all note-taking strategies lead to equal results. By considering your note-taking strategies carefully, you will be able to create a set of notes that will help retain the most important concepts from lectures and tests, which will assist you in your exam preparation.



Using note-taking in learning. **Source:** [Student Success](#) by Mary Shier, licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Two Purposes for Taking Notes

People take notes for two main reasons:

1. To keep a record of the information they heard. This is also called the *external storage* function of note-taking.
2. To facilitate learning material they are currently studying.

The availability of information on the internet may reduce the importance of the *external storage* function of note-taking. When the information is available online, it may seem logical to stop taking notes. However, by neglecting to take notes, you lose the benefits of note-taking as a learning tool.

How Note-Taking Supports Learning

Taking notes during class supports your learning in several important ways:

1. Taking notes helps you to focus your attention and avoid distractions.
2. As you take notes in class, you will be engaging your mind in identifying and organizing the main ideas. Rather than passively listening, you will be doing the work of active learning while in class, making the most of your time.

3. Creating good notes means that you will have a record for later review. Reviewing a set of condensed and well-organized notes is more efficient than re-reading longer texts and articles.

Everybody takes notes, or at least everybody claims to. But if you take a close look, many who are claiming to take notes on their laptops are actually surfing the Web, and paper notebooks are filled with doodles interrupted by a couple of random words with an asterisk next to them reminding you that “This is important!” In college and university, these approaches will not work. Your instructors expect *you* to make connections between class lectures and reading assignments; they expect *you* to create an opinion about the material presented; they expect *you* to make connections between the material and life beyond school. Your notes are your road maps for these thoughts. Do you take good notes? Actively listening and note-taking are key strategies to ensure your student success.

Effective note-taking is important because it:

- supports your listening efforts.
- allows you to test your understanding of the material.
- helps you remember the material better when you write key ideas down.
- gives you a sense of what the instructor thinks is important.
- creates your “ultimate study guide.”

There are various forms of taking notes, and which one you choose depends on both your personal style and the instructor’s approach to the material. Each can be used in a notebook, index cards, or in a digital form on your laptop. No specific type is good for all students and all situations, so we recommend that you develop your own style, but you should also be ready to modify it to fit the needs of a specific class or instructor. To be effective, all of these methods require you to listen actively and to think; merely jotting down words the instructor is saying will be of little use to you.

Note-taking methods

Method	Description	When to Use
Lists	A sequential listing of ideas as they are presented. Lists may be short phrases or complete paragraphs describing ideas in more detail.	This method is what most students use as a fallback if they haven't learned other methods. This method typically requires a lot of writing, and you may find that you are not keeping up with the professor. It is not easy for students to prioritize ideas in this method.
Outlines	The outline method places most important ideas along the left margin, which are numbered with roman numerals. Supporting ideas to these main concepts are indented and are noted with capital letters. Under each of these ideas, further detail can be added, designated with an Arabic number, a lowercase letter, and so forth.	A good method to use when material presented by the instructor is well organized. Easy to use when taking notes on your computer.
Concept Maps	When designing a concept map, place a central idea in the centre of the page and then add lines and new circles in the page for new ideas. Use arrows and lines to connect the various ideas.	Great method to show relationships among ideas. Also good if the instructor tends to hop from one idea to another and back.
Cornell Method	The Cornell method uses a two-column approach. The left column takes up no more than a third of the page and is often referred to as the "cue" or "recall" column. The right column (about two-thirds of the page) is used for taking notes using any of the methods described above or a combination of them. After class or completing the reading, review your notes and write the key ideas and concepts or questions in the left column. You may also include a summary box at the bottom of the page, in which to write a summary of the class or reading in your own words.	The Cornell method can include any of the methods above and provides a useful format for calling out key concepts, prioritizing ideas, and organizing review work. Most universities recommend using some form of the Cornell method.

The List Method

Example: The List Method of Note-taking

Learning Cycle

September 3

Prof. Jones

The learning cycle is an approach to gathering and retaining info that can help students be

successful in Col. The cycle consists of 4 steps which should all be app'd. They are preparing, which sets the foundation for learning, absorbing, which exposes us to new knowledge, capturing, which sets the information into our knowledge base and finally reviewing and applying which lets us set the know. into our memory and use it.

Preparing for learning can involve mental preparation, physical prep, and oper. prep. Mental prep includes setting learning goals for self based on what we know the class w/ cover (see syllabus)/ Also it is very important to do any assignments for the class to be able to learn w/ confidence and...

Physical Prep means having enough rest and eating well. Its hard to study when you are hungry and you won't listen well in class if you doze off.

Operation Prep means bringing all supplies to class, or having them at hand when studying... this includes pens, paper, computer, textbook, etc. Also means setting to school on time and getting a good seat (near the front).

Absorbing new knowledge is a combination of listening and reading. These are two of the most important learning skills you can have.

The list method is usually not the best choice because it is focused exclusively on capturing as much of what the instructor says as possible, not on processing the information. Most students who have not learned effective study skills use this method, because it's easy to think that this is what note-taking is all about. Even if you are skilled in some form of shorthand, you should probably also learn one of the other methods described here, because they are all better at helping you process and remember the material. You may want to take notes in class using the list method, but transcribe your notes to an outline or concept map method after class as a part of your review process. It is always important to review your notes as soon as possible after class and write a summary of the class in your own words.

The Outline Method

Example: The Outline Method of Note-taking

Learning Cycle

September 3

Prof Jones

Learning is a cycle made up of 4 steps:

- I. Preparing: setting the foundation for learning.
- II. Absorbing: (data input) exposure to new knowledge.
- III. Capturing: taking ownership of the knowledge.
- IV. Review & Apply: putting new knowledge to work.

- I. Preparing

- A. Mental Prep.

1. Do assignments—new knowledge is built on prior knowledge.
 - a. assignments from prior classes.
 - b. Readings! (May not have been assigned in class – see syllabus!)

2. Review Syllabus

- a. Know what instructor expects to cover
 - b. Know what assignments you need to do
 - c. Set yr. own obj.

- B. Physical Prep

1. Get right amount of rest. Don't zzz in class.
 2. Eat right. Hard to focus when you are hungry.
 3. Arrive on time.

- C. Practical Prep (Organizational Prep):

1. Bring right supplies – (Notebooks, Texts, Pens, etc.)
 2. Arrive on time
 - a. Get organized and ready to listen
 - b. Don't interrupt the focus of others
 - c. Get a good seat
 3. Sit in the front of the class.

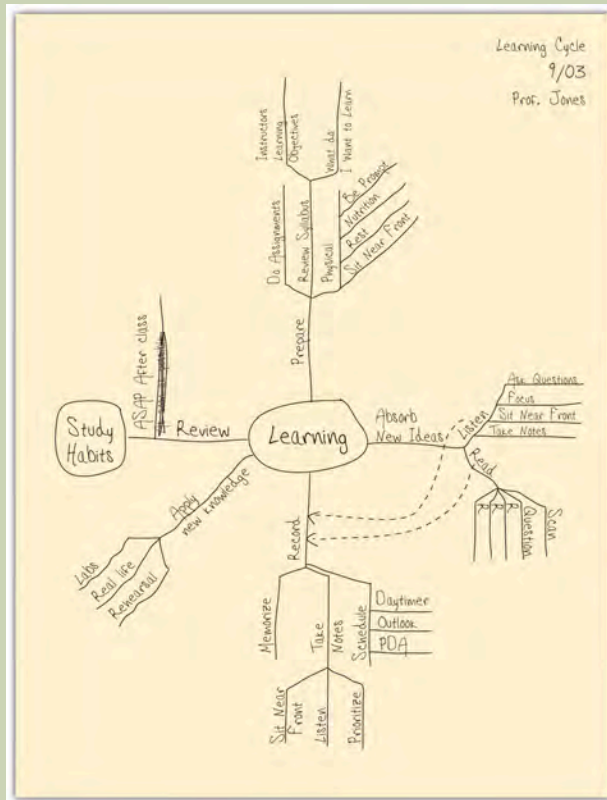
The advantage of the outline method is that it allows you to prioritize the material. Key ideas are written to the left of the page, subordinate ideas are then indented, and details of the subordinate ideas can be indented further. To further organize your ideas, you can use the typical outlining numbering scheme (starting with roman numerals for key ideas, moving to capital letters on the first subordinate level, Arabic numbers for the next level, and lowercase letters following.) At first you may have trouble identifying when the instructor moves from one idea to another. This takes practice and experience with each instructor, so don't give up! In the early stages you should use your syllabus to determine what key ideas the instructor plans to present. Your reading assignments before class can also give you guidance in identifying the key ideas.

If you're using your computer to take notes, a basic word processing application (like Microsoft Word or Works) is very effective. Format your document by selecting the outline format from the format bullets menu. Use the increase or decrease indent buttons to navigate the level of importance you want to give each item. The software will take care of the numbering for you!

After class be sure to review your notes and then summarize the class in one or two short paragraphs using your own words. This summary will significantly affect your recall and will help you prepare for the next class.

The Concept Map Method

Example: The Concept Map Method of Note-taking



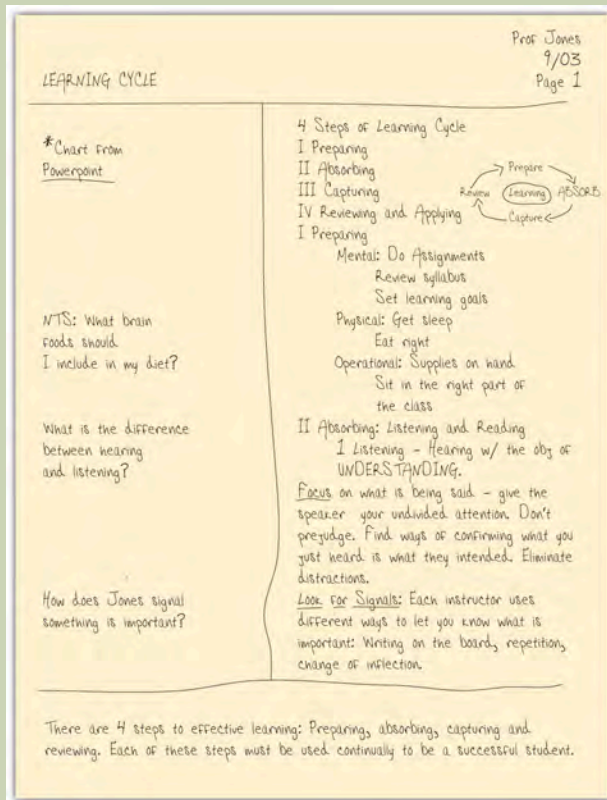
This is a very graphic method of note-taking that is especially good at capturing the relationships among ideas. Concept maps harness your visual sense to understand complex material “at a glance.” They also give you the flexibility to move from one idea to another and back easily (so they are helpful if your instructor moves freely through the material).

To develop a concept map, start by using your syllabus to rank the ideas you will listen to by level of detail (from high-level or abstract ideas to detailed facts). Select an overriding idea (high level or abstract) from the instructor’s lecture and place it in a circle in the middle of the page. Then create branches off that circle to record the more detailed information, creating additional limbs as you need them. Arrange the branches with others that interrelate closely. When a new high-level idea is presented, create a new circle with its own branches. Link together circles or concepts that are related. Use arrows and symbols to capture the relationship between the ideas. For example, an arrow may be used to illustrate cause or effect, a double-pointed arrow to illustrate dependence, or a dotted arrow to illustrate impact or effect.

As with all note-taking methods, you should summarize the chart in one or two paragraphs of your own words after class.

The Cornell Method

Example: The Cornell Method of Note-taking



The Cornell method was developed in the 1950s by Professor Walter Pauk at Cornell University¹. It is recommended by many universities because of its usefulness and flexibility. This method is simple to use for capturing notes, is helpful for defining priorities, and is a very helpful study tool.

The Cornell method follows a very specific format that consists of four boxes: a header, two columns, and a footer.

The header is a small box across the top of the page. In it you write identification information like the course name and the date of the class. Underneath the header are two columns: a narrow one on the left (no more than one-third of the page) and a wide one on the right. The wide column, called the “notes” column, takes up most of the page and is used to capture your notes using any of the methods outlined earlier. The left

column, known as the “cue” or “recall” column, is used to jot down main ideas, keywords, questions, clarifications, and other notes. It should be used both during the class and when reviewing your notes after class. Finally, use the box in the footer to write a summary of the class in your own words. This will help you make sense of your notes in the future and is a valuable tool to aid with recall and studying.

Using Index Cards for the Cornell Method

Some students like to use index cards to take notes. They actually lend themselves quite well to the Cornell method. Use the “back” or lined side of the card to write your notes in class. Use one card per key concept. The “front” unlined side of the card replaces the left hand “cue” column. Use it after class to write keywords, comments, or questions. When you study, the cards become flash cards with questions on one side and answers on the other. Write a summary of the class on a separate card and place it on the top of the deck as an introduction to what was covered in the class.

“I used to tape my lecture classes so I could fill in my sketchy notes afterwards. Now that I’m using the Cornell system, my notes are complete and organized in much less time. And my regular five-minute reviews make learning almost painless. No more taping and listening twice.”

— A student at Southern Methodist University

You will have noticed that all methods end with the same step: reviewing your notes as soon as possible after class. Any review of your notes is helpful (reading them, copying them into your computer, or even recasting them using another note-taking method). But THINK! Make your review of notes a thoughtful activity, not a mindless process. When you review your notes, think about questions you still have and determine how you will get the answers. (From the next class? Studying with a friend? Looking up material in your text or on the net?) Examine how the material applies to the course; make connections with notes from other class sessions, with material in your text, and with concepts covered in class discussions. Finally, it’s fun to think about how the material in your notes applies to real life. Consider this both at the very strategic level (as in “What does this material mean to me in relation to what I want to do with my life?”) as well as at a very mundane level (as in, “Is there anything cool here I can work into a conversation with my friends?”).

Instructor Handouts

Some instructors hand out or post their notes or their PowerPoint slides from their lectures. These handouts should *never* be considered a substitute for taking notes in class. They are a very useful complement and will

help you confirm the accuracy of your notes, but they do not involve you in the process of learning as well as your own notes do. After class, review your notes with highlighter in hand and mark keywords and ideas in your notes. This will help you write a summary of the class in your own words.

General Tips on Note-Taking

Regardless of what note-taking method you choose, there are some note-taking habits you should get into for all circumstances and all courses:

1. **Be prepared.** Make sure you have the tools you need to do the job. If you are using a notebook, be sure you have it with you and that you have enough paper. Also be sure to have your pen (and a spare) and perhaps a pen with different-coloured ink to use for emphasis. If you are taking notes on your laptop, make sure the battery is charged! Select the application that lends itself best to your style of note-taking. Microsoft Word works very well for outline notes, but you might find taking notes in Excel to work best if you are working within the Cornell method. (It's easier to align your thoughts in the cue or recall column to your notes in the right column. Just be sure you keep one idea per row!)
2. **Write on only one side of the paper.** This will allow you to integrate your reading notes with your class notes.
3. **Label, number, and date all notes at the top of each page.** This will help you keep organized.
4. **When using a laptop, position it such that you can see the instructor and white board right over your screen.** This will keep the instructor in your field of vision even if you have to glance at your screen or keyboard from time to time. Make sure your focus remains with the instructor and not on your laptop. A word of caution about laptops for note-taking: use them if you are very adept at keyboarding, but remember that not all note-taking methods work well on laptops because they do not easily allow you to draw diagrams and use special notations (scientific and math formulas, for example).
5. **Don't try to capture everything that is said.** Listen for the big ideas and write them down. Make sure you can recognize the instructor's emphasis cues and write down all ideas and keywords the instructor emphasizes. Listen for clues like "the four causes were..." or "to sum up...."
6. **Copy anything the instructor writes on the board.** It's likely to be important.
7. **Leave space between ideas.** This allows you to add additional notes later (e.g., notes on the answer to a question you or one of your classmates asked).
8. **Use signals and abbreviations.** The ones you use are up to you, but be consistent so you will know exactly what you mean by "att." when you review your notes. You may find it useful to keep a key to your abbreviations in all your notebooks.
9. **Use some method for identifying your own thoughts and questions to keep them separate from what the instructor or textbook author is saying.** Some students use different colour ink; others box or underline their own thoughts. Do whatever works for you.

10. **Create a symbol to use when you fall behind** or get lost in your note-taking. Jot down the symbol, leave some space, and focus on what the instructor is covering now. Later you can ask a classmate or the professor to help you fill in what you missed, or you can find it in your textbook.
11. **Review your notes as soon after class as possible (the same day is best).** *This is the secret to making your notes work!* Use the recall column to call out the key ideas and organize facts. Fill in any gaps in your notes and clean up or redraw hastily drawn diagrams.
12. **Write a summary of the main ideas of the class in your own words.** This process is a great aid to recall. Be sure to include any conclusions from the lecture or discussion.
13. **Use notes when preparing for a test or doing an assignment.** Your notes usually have a summary of the most important points and are useful for making sure you incorporate important concepts in your assignments and for focusing on the main concepts when studying for tests and exams.

Watch It: Note Taking

These videos provide some great tips for note-taking as well.

Note Taking (Text Version)

[Watch How to take great notes \(5:08 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Taking notes: Crash Course study skills #1, \(8:50 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Activity source: “Note Taking” H5P activity by Jessica Jones and oeratgc licensed under [CC BY NC SA 4.0](#), except where otherwise noted.

What If You Miss Class?

Clearly the best way to learn class material is to be at the class and to take your own notes. In university, regular attendance is expected. But life happens. On occasion, you may have to miss a class or lecture. When this happens, here are some strategies you can use to make up for it:

- Check with the instructor to see if there is another section of the class you can attend. Never ask the instructor “Did I miss anything important?” (Think about what that’s saying and you’ll see it’s rather insulting.)

- If the instructor posts their lectures as a podcast, listen to the lecture online and take notes. If the instructor uses PowerPoint slides, request a copy (or download them if posted) and review them carefully, jotting down your own notes and questions. Review your notes with a classmate who did attend.
- You may want to borrow class notes from a classmate. If you do, don't just copy them and insert them in your notebook. They will not be very helpful. When you borrow notes from a classmate, you should photocopy them and then review them carefully and mark your copy with your own notes and questions. Use your textbook to try to fill in the gaps. Finally, schedule a study session with the person who gave you the notes to review the material and confirm your understanding.
- If none of these options is available for you, use the course syllabus to determine what was covered in the class, then write a short paper (two pages or so) on the material using the class readings and reliable online sources. See your instructor during office hours to review your key findings and to answer any questions you still may have.

Group Notes: A Collaborative Approach

Groups within a class can take notes together using file-sharing software on the cloud such as Google Docs. The individuals in the group can add to the document in real time as different individuals are adding themselves. This creates a collaborative document that all can use, download, or adapt. This won't work for all situations but can be very useful especially in a fast-moving classroom.

Keeping Your Notes

Class is over, and you have a beautiful set of notes in your spiral notebook or saved in your laptop. You have written the summary of the class in your own words. Now what?

Start by organizing your notes. We recommend you use a three-ring binder for each of your subjects. Print your notes if you used a computer. If you used note cards, insert them in plastic photo holders for binders. Group all notes from a class or unit together in a section; this includes class notes, reading notes, and instructor handouts. You might also want to copy the instructor's syllabus for the unit on the first page of the section.

Next, spend some time linking the information across the various notes. Use the recall column in your notes to link to related information in other notes (e.g. "See class notes date/page").

If you have had a quiz or test on the unit, add it to your binder, too, but be sure to write out the correct answer for any item you missed. Link those corrections to your notes, too.

Use this opportunity to write "notes on your notes." Review your summary to see if it still is valid in light of your notes on the reading and any handouts you may have added to your notes package.

You don't need to become a pack rat with your notes. It is fairly safe to toss them after the end of a course except in the following cases:

1. If the course you took is a prerequisite for another course, or when the course is part of a standard progression of courses that build upon each other (this is very common in math and science courses), you should keep them as a reference and review for the follow-up course.
2. If the course may pertain to your future major, keep your notes. You may not realize it now that they may have future value when you study similar topics or even the same topics in more depth.
3. If you are very interested in the course subject and would like to get into the material through a more advanced course, independent study, or even research, keep your notes as a prep tool for further work.

Summary

Congratulations on finishing the second part of this module! In this module, you learned about the following:

- How note-taking supports learning, and can be used as an additional learning tool while you read
- A variety of note-taking techniques, including the list, outline, Cornell and mind mapping methods

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this section is adapted from “[5.6 Note-Taking](#)” In *Student Success* by Mary Shier, licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)./An adaptation of:

- This chapter was adapted from “[Got Notes?](#)” in *University Success* by N. Mahoney, B. Klassen, and M. D'Eon. Adapted by Mary Shier. [CC BY-NC-SA](#).
- The first two paragraphs and text under the “Two Purposes for Taking Notes” heading are from “[Take Notes from Lectures – That You’ll Actually Use](#)” in *University 101: Study, Strategize and Succeed* by Kwantlen Polytechnic University. [CC BY-SA](#).

- Alterations include removing exercises.

Notes

1. Pauk, W. & Owens, R.J.Q. (2013). *How to Study in College*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

REFLECTION

Introduction

Now that you have spent some time exploring different reading and note-taking techniques, it is time to reflect and explore how you can tailor these strategies to help you succeed both in and beyond the classroom.

Learning Objectives

- Practice using a variety of reading and note-taking techniques.
- Identify reading and note-taking techniques that work best with the way you learn.

To Do List

- Watch the video on Reflective Writing.
- Read “Two Types of Reflective Writing” in *Intercultural Basic Communications*.
- Watch the video on How to Write a Summary.
- Complete the Reading & Note-Taking Reflection in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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REFLECTIVE WRITING AND SUMMARIES

Reflective Writing Assignments

In this type of writing, your instructor wants to see that you are making personal connections between the course content and experiences in your life. Reflective writing is inextricably linked to critical thinking.

Reflective writing uses first person pronouns and writers are encouraged to support opinions and analysis by referring to personal experiences.

Formal reflective writing assignments differ from discussion board posts by being longer and more detailed. Also, instructors usually want you to use APA formatting (correct font, spacing, indentation, and title page). You may be specifically required to paraphrase and cite information from secondary sources.

What is Reflective Writing?

Watch It: Reflective Writing

[Watch Reflective writing \(6:30 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Two Types of Reflective Writing Assignments

1. Reading Reflection
2. Experiential Reflection

Reading Reflection

In this type of reflective writing assignment, you will need to review course materials (read an article or chapter or watch a video or movie) and write a response.

Your response should:

- demonstrate your understanding of the reading by providing a concise summary using your own words
- make a thoughtful and balanced assessment of the materials you've reviewed
- make connections between the course materials and your own experiences and/or to other sources of information on the topic
- identify lack of knowledge or personal bias without fear of losing marks; this is part of the reflection process
- recognize opinions that you may not agree with, and consider these with respect
- consider how what you've learned from the course materials has changed or confirmed your previous thinking about a topic
- identify steps you may take to add to your understanding of this topic
- end with a conclusion that explains how you will use the knowledge you have acquired

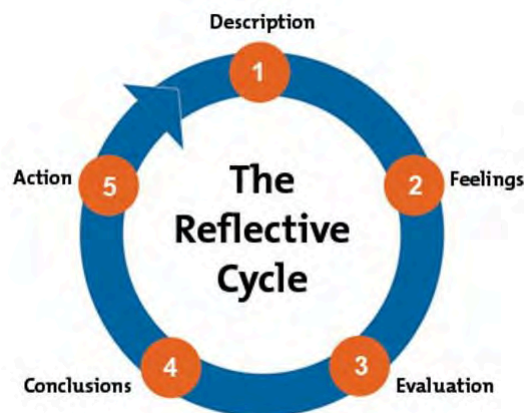


Image credit: *Gibb's reflective cycle* adapted by Mind Tools (n.d.) from *Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods* by G. Gibbs, 1998, Oxford Polytechnic. Used under Fair Dealing.

1. **Description:** These are the details about your writing topic. What happened? When? Where? Why?
2. **Feelings:** Describe the emotions, thoughts and responses you felt and thought towards this topic. Often emotions are evidence of our own discomfort, lack of knowledge or bias towards the topic.
3. **Evaluation:** Compare your previous knowledge of this topic with the new knowledge or experience. Where did you get your information from? Consider the new details and their relation to your previous knowledge.
4. **Conclusions:** Identify new views and ideas; develop questions for future examination.

5. **Action:** Identify changes in your approach or actions towards this topic. For example, more research, more practice, discussion with others, etc.

How to complete a reading reflection:

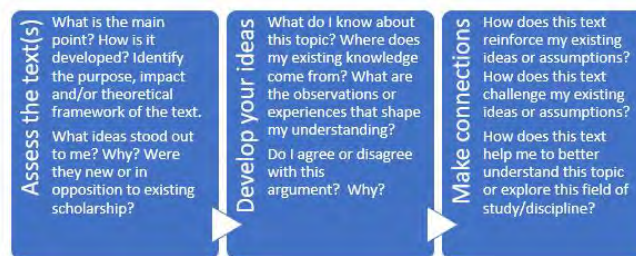
Critical reflection requires thoughtful and persistent inquiry. Although basic questions like “What is the thesis?” and “What is the evidence?” are important to demonstrate your understanding, you need to interrogate your own assumptions and knowledge to deepen your analysis and focus your assessment of the text. In your reflection, you may choose to focus on one part of the reading, rather than the entire article.

- **Summarize the most important information from the assigned reading, video or audio. Concisely explain the topic and the most important details, not all of the small examples.**

Watch It: How to Write a Summary

[Watch How to write a summary \(3 mins\) on YouTube](#)

- **Reflect on the article by assessing the text, developing your ideas, and making connections:**



Identify where your ideas originated from; you may include personal experiences, cultural beliefs, APA-cited facts, etc. Use paraphrases to demonstrate your understanding of the material that you read or watched. Include APA documentation style to cite ideas from the source. You are encouraged to write about your own experiences and knowledge about the topic. You may or may not have APA citations for this part.

Experiential Reflection

In this type of reflective writing assignment, you will need to participate in an experience, like a lab or placement, and write a response. This type of writing is often used in programs that require students to participate in hands-on, experiential learning, like business, nursing, and education programs.

Your response should:

- make connections between theory and practice
- describe your experience
- assess a theory or approach based on your observations
- evaluate and critique your experience based on class learning
- evaluate your level of knowledge and skills based on your experience
- determine how you might act differently next time you are in a similar situation



Source: Correlation between Critical Thinking and Reflection, adapted by Confederation College from Reflective blogs in clinical education to promote critical thinking in dental hygiene students by A. O. K. Wetmore, L. D. Boyd, D. M. Bowen, R. E. Pattillo, 2010, *Journal of Dental Education*, 74(12), p. 1348. Used under Fair Dealing.

Summary

Congratulations on finishing the final part of this module!

- You did some inner exploration and practiced using a variety of note-taking and reading techniques.
- Be sure to try out other techniques as you may want to change them depending on what class you are in, or what assessment you are completing.

You are now ready to move on to Unit 3: Writing Skills.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from “[Reflective Writing and Summaries](#)” In [Intercultural Business Communication](#) by Confederation College, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

References

- Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Further Education Unit. Oxford Polytechnic.
- Mind Tools. (n.d.). *Gibb's reflective cycle* [Image]. <https://www.mindtools.com/ano9qiu/gibbs-reflective-cycle>.
- Wetmore, A. O., Boyd, L. D., Bowen, D. M., & Pattillo, R. E. (2010). Reflective blogs in clinical education to promote critical thinking in dental hygiene students. *Journal of Dental Education*, 74(12), 1337–1350.

UNIT 3: WRITING SKILLS

English Degree Entrance Preparation compiled by Carrie Molinski & Sue Slessor.

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Please visit the web version of [English for Degree Entrance Preparation](#) to access the complete book, interactive activities and videos.

Table of Contents

[Academic Writing](#)

- [Writing for College](#)
- [Georgian Services & Resources](#)

[Pre-Writing](#)

- [Brainstorming Tipsheet](#)
- [Apply Pre-writing Models](#)
- [The Writing Process in 7 Steps](#)

[Paragraphs](#)

- [Developing Paragraphs](#)
- [Descriptive Paragraphs](#)
- [Narrative Paragraphs](#)
- [Expository Paragraphs](#)
- [Persuasive Paragraphs](#)

[Essays](#)

- [Expository Essays](#)
- [The Structure of a Persuasive Essay](#)

- [Narration](#)
- [Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement](#)
- [Organizing Your Writing](#)
- [Writing Body Paragraphs](#)
- [Writing Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs](#)

ACADEMIC WRITING

Introduction

What is academic writing?

Academic writing is the type of writing that is done for academic purposes. When students write academic papers of any kind, they express and present ideas in response to some type of prompt or assignment from their professor. This kind of writing follows some certain expectations when considering organization, sequencing, logic, elaboration, support, and format.

While there are many types of academic writing, for example, case studies, reviews, research papers, etc., this writing unit will focus on the elements and skills needed to write a short essay. These skills are transferrable to other types of academic writing, for instance to research essay writing, which is done in the EDE course.

Why is academic writing important?

The ability to write academically is central to success in post-secondary education and in many professional careers. Academic writing is important because it is an effective method to making ideas known in a way that can convince others (including your professor) that these ideas are solid, rational, and objective. Academic writing is powerful and can be used to make real changes in the world around us.

Learning Objectives

- Understand academic writing and its importance.
- Learn about common writing assignments and the steps involved in the writing process.
- Reflect on how writing will help you attain your goals as well as how it may be challenging at times.
- Learn where to get extra help in the writing process.

To Do List

- Read “Writing for College”, in *Communication Essentials for College*.
- Visit the “Georgian Resources & Services” from the Georgian College Library Website.
- Read “The Writing Process in 7 Steps” handout.

- Complete the Writing Centre Assignment in Blackboard.
- Complete the Reflection Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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WRITING FOR COLLEGE

Common Writing Assignments

College writing assignments serve a different purpose than the typical writing assignments you completed in high school. In high school, teachers generally focus on teaching you to write in a variety of modes and formats, including personal writing, expository writing, research papers, creative writing, and writing short answers and essays for exams. Over time, these assignments help you build a foundation of writing skills.

In college, many instructors will expect you to already have that foundation.

Your college communications courses will focus on writing for its own sake, helping you make the transition to college-level writing assignments. However, in most other college courses, writing assignments serve a different purpose. In those courses, you may use writing as one tool among many for learning how to think about a particular academic discipline.

Additionally, certain assignments teach you how to meet the expectations for professional writing in a given field. Depending on the class, you might be asked to write a lab report, a case study, a literary analysis, a business plan, or an account of a personal interview. You will need to learn and follow the standard conventions for those types of written products.

Finally, personal and creative writing assignments are less common in college than in high school. College courses emphasize expository writing, writing that explains or informs. Usually, expository writing assignments will incorporate outside research, too. Some classes will also require persuasive writing assignments in which you state and support your position on an issue. College instructors will hold you to a higher standard when it comes to supporting your ideas with reasons and evidence.

The following activity describes some of the most common types of college writing assignments. It includes minor, less formal assignments as well as major ones. Which specific assignments you encounter will depend on the courses you take and the learning objectives developed by your instructors.

Check Your Understanding: Common Types of Post Secondary Assignments

Common Types of Post Secondary Assignments (Text version)

Match the assignment types listed below to the numbered descriptions.

Assignment types: Literature review, Personal response paper, Problem solution paper, Critique, Research paper, Research journal, Position paper, Laboratory report, Summary, Case study

Descriptions:

1. Expresses and explains your response to a reading assignment, a provocative quote, or a specific issue; may be very brief (sometimes a page or less) or more in depth (eg: Writing about videos on ineffective management for a business course).
2. Restates the main points of a longer passage objectively and in your own words (eg: a one-page precis of a research article).
3. States and defends your position on an issue (often a controversial issue) (eg: an essay agreeing with or disagreeing with capital punishment).
4. Presents a problem, explains its causes, and proposes and explains a solution (eg: a plan for a crisis communication strategy).
5. States a thesis about a particular literary work and develops the thesis with evidence from the work and, sometimes, from additional sources (eg: an essay that explains the purpose of a poem).
6. Sums up available research findings on a particular topic (eg: an examination of all the studies about violent media).
7. Investigates a particular person, group, or event in depth for the purpose of drawing a larger conclusion from the analysis (eg: a report on the successful treatment of a cat with kidney disease).
8. Presents a laboratory experiment, including the hypothesis, methods of data collection, results, and conclusions (eg: the results of a study on nutrition in rats)
9. Records a student's ideas and findings during the course of a long-term research project (eg: a reflection of the process of research, maintained over time).
10. Presents a thesis and supports it with original research and/or other researchers' findings on the topic; can take several different formats depending on the subject area (eg: a deeply researched examination on the success of seat belt laws).

Check your answers:¹

Activity source: “Table 1.2 Replacement” by Brenna Clarke Gray is based on the content from “[Chapter 1. Post-secondary Reading & Writing](#)” In *Writing for Success – 1st Canadian HSP Edition* by Tara Harkoff & [author removed], licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

Writing at Work

Part of managing your education is communicating well with others at your college. For instance, you might need to e-mail your instructor to request an office appointment or explain why you will need to miss a class. You might need to contact administrators with questions about your tuition or financial aid. Later, you might ask instructors to write recommendations on your behalf.

Treat these documents as professional communications. Address the recipient politely; state your question, problem, or request clearly; and use a formal, respectful tone. Doing so helps you make a positive impression and get a quicker response.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this section is adapted from “[2.3 – Writing For College](#)” In *Communication Essentials for College* by Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). An adaptation from “[Chapter 1. Introduction to Academic Writing](#)” In *Writing for Success – 1st Canadian Edition* by Tara Harkoff & [author removed] licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). / Adaptations include student focused language, updates to attributions etc. Content has been shortened.

Notes

1. 1. Personal response paper, 2. Summary, 3. Position paper, 4. Problem solution paper, 5. Critique, 6. Literature Review, 7. Case study, 8. Lab report, 9. Research journal 10. Research paper

GEORGIAN RESOURCES & SERVICES

When writing, students sometimes face some challenges that make it difficult to move forward in the process. While this course is helpful, it may not include everything you need. Here are some suggested sources of help:

1. Your teacher
2. Your peers
3. Georgian College's Writing Centre in the Georgian Library

Check out the details on the Georgian College webpage. There are a variety of services and resources available to Georgian College students!

Library Resources & Services

There are a variety of [library services \[New Tab\]](#) and resources available to Georgian College students!

Looking for resources for your assignments?

You can access the [Georgian Library and Academic Success \[New Tab\]](#) website and [Page 1+ \[New Tab\]](#) to search for resources for your assignments.

Getting ready to research

[Video tutorials \[New Tab\]](#) are available you to learn more about doing research, evaluating resources, plagiarism, and what peer-reviewed means.

Unsure of where to start your research?

[Research Guides \[New Tab\]](#) are available for program areas and can help students get a direction for their research.

Need help with research?

The library staff is here to help! [Research help \[New Tab\]](#) is available at the library online through askON or in-person at the library.

You can also contact the library via email at: library@georgiancollege.ca

Academic Success Services

Looking for writing help?

The [Writing Centre \[New Tab\]](#) is here to help! The Writing Centre works to help students become more confident with their writing and APA; it is not an editing service.

The [Language Help Centre \[New Tab\]](#) is also a great support which helps students to learn how to use proper grammar, write clear sentences and prepare a presentation.

[APA Workshop videos \[New Tab\]](#) are available for quick reference and to help guide you with formatting your APA title page and paper, APA references and in-text citations and developing your understanding of APA.

The [APA Guide \[New Tab\]](#) can be used as reference to structure APA references and in-text citations.

Looking for tutoring services?

[Tutoring services \[New Tab\]](#) are available free to Georgian students.

Looking for math help?

The [Math Centre \[New Tab\]](#) is here to help! The Math Centre offers free math tutoring service for all Georgian students.

The Math Centre offers a number of [math videos \[New Tab\]](#) to help students with a variety of math topics.

Summary

In this module, you were introduced to academic writing and its relevance in your academic career and beyond. Writing is an important way to communicate what you know in an organized manner. While writing is not quick or easy, there are structures, steps, and methods that can help, and you will learn about these in the upcoming modules. Remember to reach out for help from your teacher, peers, friends, and the Georgian Writing Centre when needed.

Attribution & References

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PRE-WRITING

Introduction

This module explains some of the techniques and strategies you can use before you begin writing paragraphs and essays, or any academic writing. Brainstorming, freewriting, idea-mapping, and journalist style questioning are explained, but there are other prewriting techniques that you will read about in the digital text provided (Communication Essentials for College).

Learning Objectives

- Understand the purposes of different prewriting methods such as brainstorming, mind-mapping, freewriting, and questioning.
- Learn to use prewriting methods to generate ideas and details that can be used in first draft writing.

To Do List

- Read “Apply Prewriting Models” in Communication Essentials for College.
- Read about freewriting, brainstorming and mind-mapping, and questioning.
- Read the document called “Better Brainstorming Tipsheet.”
- Complete the Brainstorming Assignment in Blackboard.
- Review the section on “Questioning.”
- Complete the Questioning Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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BRAINSTORMING TIP SHEET

Brainstorming

Brainstorming (Text Version)

Brainstorming is process of creative thinking that is used to generate ideas and/or solutions to a problem. Here are eight tips to help you improve your brainstorming process.

1. Define your topic. Be sure you understand your assignment. What have you been asked to write about and why? These questions will help you focus on the purpose of your writing.
2. Understand your audience. Who are your potential readers? Think about the type of information they will be looking for and what will interest them.
3. Become familiar with the topic. What do you already know? What are your immediate ideas and reactions to this topic? Make a note of your thoughts.
4. Determine what you need to find out. What areas are you still unfamiliar with? Create a list so your research is focused; this will also break the process down into smaller steps so that it's less time consuming.
5. Try to select a topic based on personal interest. Researching and writing your assignment will be more enjoyable if you choose to write about something you are interested in.
6. Plan your objective. What is the goal of your writing? If you are presenting research, choose a topic that you have great interest in and one that you can find sufficient information about. If you are arguing a point, choose a side you can strongly defend.
7. Talk about your writing. Telling someone about the topic of your writing allows you to hear your ideas and prompts you to clarify your points. Feedback from your listener can also help you refine your ideas.
8. Share your writing. Working with others often results in more good ideas than working on your own. If you are working on a group assignment, start by writing your ideas on a piece of paper, then pass the paper to each of your group members so they can write their ideas down.

Activity source: "[Brainstorming TipSheet](#)" by [Seneca College](#), modified by [The Learning Portal](#), is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA](#).

Attribution & References

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APPLY PREWRITING MODELS

Prewriting is the stage of the writing process during which you transfer your abstract thoughts into more concrete ideas in ink on paper (or in type on a computer screen). Although prewriting techniques can be helpful in all stages of the writing process, the following four strategies are best used when initially deciding on a topic:

1. Using experience and observations
2. Reading
3. Freewriting
4. Asking questions

At this stage in the writing process, it is OK if you choose a general topic. Later you will learn more prewriting strategies that will narrow the focus of the topic.

Choosing a Topic

In addition to understanding that writing is a process, writers also understand that choosing a good general topic for an assignment is an essential step. Sometimes your instructor will give you an idea to begin an assignment, and other times your instructor will ask you to come up with a topic on your own. A good topic not only covers what an assignment will be about but also fits the assignment's purpose and its audience.

In this chapter, you will follow a writer named Mariah as she prepares a piece of writing. You will also be planning one of your own. The first important step is for you to tell yourself *why* you are writing (to inform, to explain, or some other purpose) and *for whom* you are writing. Write your purpose and your audience on your own sheet of paper, and keep the paper close by as you read and complete exercises in this chapter.

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

Using Experience and Observations

When selecting a topic, you may also want to consider something that interests you or something based on your own life and personal experiences. Even everyday observations can lead to interesting topics. After writers think about their experiences and observations, they often take notes on paper to better develop their thoughts. These notes help writers discover what they have to say about their topic.

Tip

Have you seen an attention-grabbing story on your local news channel? Many current issues appear on television, in magazines, and on the Internet. These can all provide inspiration for your writing.

Reading

Reading plays a vital role in all the stages of the writing process, but it first figures in the development of ideas and topics. Different kinds of documents can help you choose a topic and also develop that topic. For example, a magazine advertising the latest research on the threat of global warming may catch your eye in the supermarket. This cover may interest you, and you may consider global warming as a topic. Or maybe a novel's courtroom drama sparks your curiosity of a particular lawsuit or legal controversy.

After you choose a topic, critical reading is essential to the development of a topic. While reading almost any document, you evaluate the author's point of view by thinking about their main idea and their support. When you judge the author's argument, you discover more about not only the author's opinion but also your own.

Tip

The steps in the writing process may seem time consuming at first, but following these steps will save you time in the future. The more you plan in the beginning by reading and using prewriting strategies, the less time you may spend writing and editing later because your ideas will develop more swiftly.

Prewriting strategies depend on your critical reading skills. Reading prewriting exercises (and outlines and drafts later in the writing process) will further develop your topic and ideas. As you continue to follow the writing process, you will see how Mariah uses critical reading skills to assess her own prewriting exercises.

Freewriting

Freewriting is an exercise in which you write freely about any topic for a set amount of time (usually three to five minutes). During the time limit, you may jot down any thoughts that come to your mind. Try not to worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Instead, write as quickly as you can without stopping. If you get stuck, just copy the same word or phrase over and over until you come up with a new thought.

Quickly recording your thoughts on paper will help you discover what you have to say about a topic. When writing quickly, try not to doubt or question your ideas. Allow yourself to write freely and unselfconsciously. Once you start writing with few limitations, you may find you have more to say than you first realized. Freewriting may even lead you to discover another topic that excites you even more.

Look at Mariah's example. The instructor allowed the members of the class to choose their own topics, and Mariah thought about her experiences as a communications major. She used this freewriting exercise to help her generate more concrete ideas from her own experience.

Last semester my favourite class was about mass media. We got to study radio and television. People say we watch too much television, and even though I try not to, I end up watching a few reality shows just to relax. Everyone has to relax! It's too hard to relax when something like the news (my husband watches all the time) is on because it's too scary now. Too much bad news, not enough good news. News. Newspapers I don't read as much anymore. I can get the headlines on my homepage when I check my email. E-mail could be considered mass media too these days. I used to go to the video store a few times a week before I started school, but now the only way I know what movies are current is to listen for the Oscar nominations. We have cable but we can't afford the movie channels, so I sometimes look at older movies late at night. UGH. A few of them get played again and again until you're sick of them. My husband thinks I'm crazy, but sometimes there are old black-and-whites on from the 1930s and '40s. I could never live my life in black-and-white. I like the home decorating shows and love how people use colour on their walls. Makes rooms look so bright. When we buy a home, if we ever can, I'll use lots of colour. Some of those shows even show you how to do major renovations by yourself. Knock down walls and everything. Not for me – or my husband. I'm handier than he is. I wonder if they could make a reality show about us!

Watch It: Freewriting

[Watch Freewriting \(2 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Check Your Understanding: Freewriting

Freewrite about one event you have recently experienced. With this event in mind, write without stopping for five minutes. After you finish, read over what you wrote. Does anything stand out to you as a good general topic to write about?

Asking Questions

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? In everyday situations, you pose these kinds of questions to get more information. Who will be my partner for the project? When is the next meeting? Why is my car making that odd noise?

You seek the answers to these questions to gain knowledge, to better understand your daily experiences, and to plan for the future. Asking these types of questions will also help you with the writing process. As you choose your topic, answering these questions can help you revisit the ideas you already have and generate new ways to think about your topic. You may also discover aspects of the topic that are unfamiliar to you and that you would like to learn more about. All these idea-gathering techniques will help you plan for future work on your assignment.

When Mariah reread her freewriting notes, she found she had rambled and her thoughts were disjointed. She realized that the topic that interested her most was the one she started with: the media. She then decided to explore that topic by asking herself questions about it. Her purpose was to refine media into a topic she felt comfortable writing about. To see how asking questions can help you choose a topic, take a look at the following chart that Mariah completed to record her questions and answers. She asked herself the questions

that reporters and journalists use to gather information for their stories. The questions are often called the 5WH questions, after their initial letters.

Table 1 – Asking Questions

Questions	Answers
Who?	I use media. Students, teachers, parents, employers and employees—almost everyone uses media.
What?	The media can be a lot of things. Television, radio, email (I think), newspapers, magazines, books.
Where?	The media is almost everywhere now. It’s in homes, at work, in cars, even on cell phones!
When?	Media has been around for a long time, but seems a lot more important now.
When?	Hmm. This is a good question. I don’t know why there is mass media. Maybe we have it because we have the technology now. Or people live far away from their families and they have to stay in touch.
How?	Well, media is possible because of the technology inventions, but I don’t know how they all work!

Tip

Prewriting is very purpose driven; it does not follow a set of hard-and-fast rules. The purpose of prewriting is to find and explore ideas so that you will be prepared to write. A prewriting technique like asking questions can help you both find a topic and explore it. Freewriting may not seem to fit your thinking process, but keep an open mind. It may work better than you think. Perhaps brainstorming a list of topics might fit your personal style. Mariah found freewriting and asking questions to be fruitful strategies to use. In your own prewriting, use the 5WH questions in any way that benefits your planning.

Check Your Understanding: Answering the 5WH questions

Choose a general topic idea from the prewriting you completed in “Exercise 1” of this chapter. Then read each question and use your own paper to answer the 5WH questions. As with Mariah when

she explored her writing topic for more detail, it is OK if you do not know all the answers. If you do not know an answer, use your own opinion to speculate, or guess. You may also use factual information from books or articles you previously read on your topic. Later in the chapter, you will read about additional ways (like searching the Internet) to answer your questions and explore your guesses.

5WH Questions

1. Who?
2. What?
3. Where?
4. When?
5. Why?
6. How?

Watch It: Choosing a Research Topic

[**Watch Tutorial: Choosing a research paper topic \(4 mins\) on YouTube**](#)

Now that you have completed some of the prewriting exercises, you may feel less anxious about starting a paper from scratch. With some ideas down on paper (or saved on a computer), writers are often more comfortable continuing the writing process. After identifying a good general topic, you, too, are ready to continue the process.

Tip

You may find that you need to adjust your topic as you move through the writing stages (and as you

complete the exercises in this chapter). If the topic you have chosen is not working, you can repeat the prewriting activities until you find a better one.

More Prewriting Techniques

The prewriting techniques of freewriting and asking questions helped Mariah think more about her topic, but the following prewriting strategies can help her (and you) narrow the focus of the topic:

- Brainstorming
- Idea mapping
- Searching the Internet

Narrowing the Focus

Narrowing the focus means breaking up the topic into subtopics, or more specific points. Generating lots of subtopics will help you eventually select the ones that fit the assignment and appeal to you and your audience.

After rereading her syllabus, Mariah realized her general topic, mass media, is too broad for her class's short paper requirement. Three pages are not enough to cover all the concerns in mass media today. Mariah also realized that although her readers are other communications majors who are interested in the topic, they may want to read a paper about a particular issue in mass media.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is similar to list making. You can make a list on your own or in a group with your classmates. Start with a blank sheet of paper (or a blank computer document) and write your general topic across the top. Underneath your topic, make a list of more specific ideas. Think of your general topic as a broad category and the list items as things that fit in that category. Often you will find that one item can lead to the next, creating a flow of ideas that can help you narrow your focus to a more specific paper topic.

The following is Mariah's brainstorming list:

Mass media

- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Broadcasting
- Radio
- Television
- DVD
- Gaming/video games
- Internet
- Cell phones
- Smart phones
- Text messages
- Tiny cameras
- GPS

From this list, Mariah could narrow her focus to a particular technology under the broad category of mass media.

Idea Mapping

Idea mapping allows you to visualize your ideas on paper using circles, lines, and arrows. This technique is also known as clustering because ideas are broken down and clustered, or grouped together. Many writers like this method because the shapes show how the ideas relate or connect, and writers can find a focused topic from the connections mapped. Using idea mapping, you might discover interesting connections between topics that you had not thought of before.

To create an idea map, start with your general topic in a circle in the center of a blank sheet of paper. Then write specific ideas around it and use lines or arrows to connect them together. Add and cluster as many ideas as you can think of.

In addition to brainstorming, Mariah tried idea mapping. Review the following idea map that Mariah created:



Figure 1. Mariah’s image map starts with Mass media, and branches off to radio and TV. Radio branches off to music, downloads vs. CDs and piracy. TV branches off to DVDs and Blu-ray as well as cable, digital recording and high definition.

Notice Mariah’s largest circle contains her general topic, mass media. Then, the general topic branches into two subtopics written in two smaller circles: television and radio. The subtopic television branches into even more specific topics: cable and DVDs. From there, Mariah drew more circles and wrote more specific ideas: high definition and digital recording from cable and Blu-ray from DVDs. The radio topic led Mariah to draw connections between music, downloads versus CDs, and, finally, piracy.

From this idea map, Mariah saw she could consider narrowing the focus of her mass media topic to the more specific topic of music piracy.

Watch It: Brainstorming and Prewriting

[Watch Brainstorming and prewriting \(3:32 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Searching the Internet

Using search engines on the internet is a good way to see what kinds of websites are available on your topic. Writers use search engines not only to understand more about the topic’s specific issues but also to get better acquainted with their audience.

When you search the internet, type some key words from your broad topic or words from your narrowed focus into your browser's search engine (many good general and specialized search engines are available for you to try). Then look over the results for relevant and interesting articles.

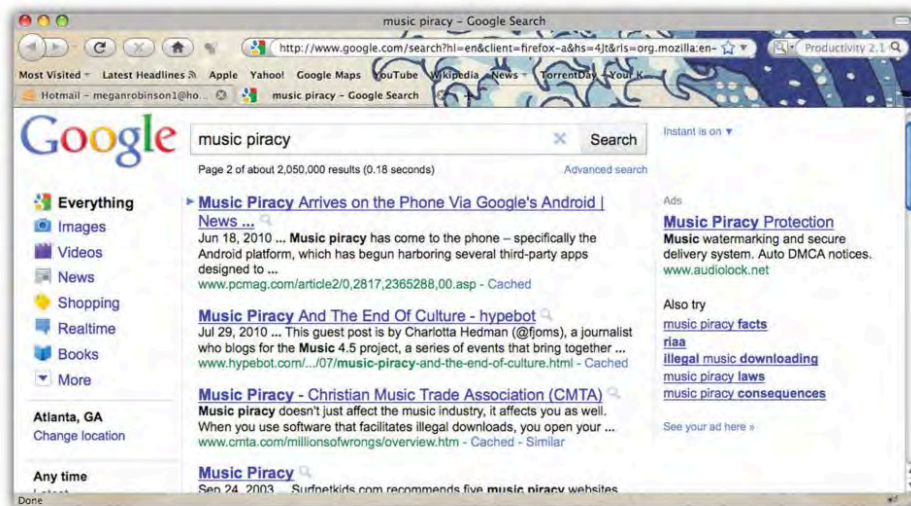
Results from an internet search show writers the following information:

- Who is talking about the topic
- How the topic is being discussed
- What specific points are currently being discussed about the topic

Tip

If the search engine results are not what you are looking for, revise your key words and search again. Some search engines also offer suggestions for related searches that may give you better results.

Mariah typed the words *music piracy* from her idea map into Google.



Retrieved from
<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&client=firefox-a&hs=4Jt&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&q=music+piracy&start=10&sa=N!>>

Figure 2. Mariah's Google search revealed websites about music piracy from magazines, hypebot and trade associations.

Not all the results online search engines return will be useful or reliable. Give careful consideration to the reliability of an online source before selecting a topic based on it. Remember that factual information can be verified in other sources, both online and in print.

The results from Mariah’s search included websites from university publications, personal blogs, online news sources, and lots of legal cases sponsored by the recording industry. Reading legal jargon made Mariah uncomfortable with the results, so she decided to look further. Reviewing her map, she realized that she was more interested in consumer aspects of mass media, so she refocused her search to media technology and the sometimes confusing array of expensive products that fill electronics stores. Now, Mariah considers a paper topic on the products that have fed the mass media boom in everyday lives.

Check Your Understanding: Prewriting

In the last exercise, you chose a possible topic and explored it by answering questions about it using the 5WH questions. However, this topic may still be too broad. In this exercise, choose and complete one of the prewriting strategies to narrow the focus. Use either brainstorming, idea mapping, or searching the Internet.

Prewriting strategies are a vital first step in the writing process. First, they help you first choose a broad topic and then they help you narrow the focus of the topic to a more specific idea. An effective topic ensures that you are ready for the next step.

Topic Checklist—Developing a Good Topic

The following checklist can help you decide if your narrowed topic is a good topic for your assignment:

- Am I interested in this topic?
- Would my audience be interested?
- Do I have prior knowledge or experience with this topic? If so, would I be comfortable exploring this topic and sharing my experiences?

- Do I want to learn more about this topic?
- Is this topic specific?
- Does it fit the length of the assignment?

With your narrowed focus in mind, answer the bulleted questions in the checklist for developing a good topic. If you can answer “yes” to all the questions, write your topic on the line. If you answer “no” to any of the questions, think about another topic or adjust the one you have and try the prewriting strategies again.

My narrowed topic: _____

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this section is adapted from “[3.2 – Apply Prewriting Models](#)” In *Communication Essentials for College* by Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). An adaptation from “[8.1 Apply Prewriting Models](#)” In *Writing for Success* by University of Minnesota licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). / Adaptations: Additional accessibility features have been added to original content. Alterations include renaming exercises as learning activities and added brainstorming and prewriting video.

THE WRITING PROCESS IN 7 STEPS

Below is an infographic that explains the writing process in 7 steps. It is attached below if you would like to save or print it. Read though the steps, and think about which ones will be the most enjoyable for you. Do you see any steps that might be challenging? Why do think so?

The Writing Process in 7 Steps

The Writing Process in 7 Steps (Text version)

1. **Prewriting:** Brainstorming, mind-mapping, researching, questioning, and thinking are the first steps in the writing process. These are referred to as prewriting techniques or methods. Also, make sure you understand the assignment.
2. **Outlining and Organizing:** After ideas are generated, they can be organized to create an outline for a written assignment like an essay or research paper. A thesis can start to be developed and paragraph topics selected. Research can be done if necessary.
3. **First Draft:** Next, a first draft can be started. This is the first version of the written piece. It can be done with pen and paper, but usually the computer is ideal since changes can be made easily and it can be shared if needed.
4. **Revision:** Once the first version is drafted, major revisions can take place. This may involve subtracting substantial sections, reordering paragraphs, or adding more content. After the revision the second draft is created.
5. **Editing:** The second draft needs to be fine-tuned by checking for spelling and grammar errors as well as structural problems or formatting issues. Double-check that you have followed instructions and included all the elements.
6. **Sharing:** If possible, have a peer or mentor read your final draft to get some input. Most colleges, including Georgian, have [Writing Centres \[New Tab\]](#) where you can get some input at any stage of the writing process.
7. **Submission:** Finally, submit your writing for evaluation or prepare it for publishing. Give yourself a pat on the back for completing the writing process. It is a lot of work but very satisfying to finish a good piece of writing.

Source: "Writing Process in 7 Steps" by Joanne Pineda, licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

Summary

This module explained some of the techniques and strategies that you can use before you begin writing paragraphs and essays, or any academic writing. Brainstorming, freewriting, idea-mapping, and journalist style questioning will be used in the next module as you start to write some paragraphs.

Attribution & References

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PARAGRAPHS

Introduction

Now that you have learned some prewriting methods to generate topics and ideas, you will learn how to structure these into paragraphs. Paragraphs are about one central idea and can be just one sentence long, but for the purposes of academic writing, they are usually 8 to 12 sentences in length. Paragraphs can stand alone, but in academic writing, multiple paragraphs are used to write compositions, for example, an essay, research paper, or a review.

In this module you will learn about the typical structure and organization of a paragraph in academic writing. You will practice your skills by completing paragraph outlines, rough drafts, and final drafts of your paragraphs.

Learning Objectives

- Discover the elements and organization of an academic paragraph.
- Identify different types of writing: descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive.
- Use outlines and organization tools to create a first draft of a paragraph.
- Write a first draft of a paragraph by following the first three steps of the writing process.
- Use APA 7 (American Psychological Association) to format a paper and create a title/cover page.
- Write a final draft of a paragraph by following all seven steps of the writing process.

To Do List

- Read “Developing Paragraphs” in *Communication Essentials for College*.
- Explore “Descriptive, Narrative, Expository, Persuasive Paragraphs”.
- Review the sample APA sample cover page and sample paragraph assignment.
- Complete the First Draft Assignment in Blackboard.
- Complete the Final Draft Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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DEVELOPING PARAGRAPHS

Now that you have identified common purposes for writing and learned how to select appropriate content for a particular audience, you can think about the structure of a paragraph in greater detail. Composing an effective paragraph requires a method similar to building a house. You may have the finest content, or materials, but if you do not arrange them in the correct order, the final product will not hold together very well.

A strong paragraph contains three distinct components:

1. **Topic sentence:** the topic sentence is the main idea of the paragraph.
2. **Body:** the body is composed of the supporting sentences that develop the main point.
3. **Conclusion:** the conclusion is the final sentence that summarizes the main point.

The foundation of a good paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence relates to the thesis, or main point, of the essay (see [Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement](#) for more information about thesis statements) and guides the reader by signposting what the paragraph is about. All the sentences in the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence.

This section covers the major components of a paragraph and examines how to develop an effective topic sentence.

Developing a Topic Sentence

Pick up any newspaper or magazine and read the first sentence of an article. Are you fairly confident that you know what the rest of the article is about? If so, you have likely read the topic sentence.

An effective topic sentence combines a main idea with the writer's personal attitude or opinion. It serves to orient the reader and provides an indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph. Read the following example.

Creating a national set of standards for math and English education will improve student learning in many provinces.

This topic sentence declares a favourable position for standardizing math and English education. After reading this sentence, a reader might reasonably expect the writer to provide supporting details and facts as to why standardizing math and English education might improve student learning in many provinces. If the purpose of the essay is actually to evaluate education in only one particular province, or to discuss math or English education specifically, then the topic sentence is misleading.

Tip

When writing an essay draft, allow a friend or colleague to read the opening line of your first paragraph. Ask your reader to predict what your paper will be about. If they are unable to guess your topic accurately, you should consider revising your topic sentence so that it clearly defines your purpose in writing.

Main Idea versus Controlling Idea

Topic sentences contain both a main idea (the subject, or topic that the writer is discussing) and a controlling idea (the writer's specific stance on that subject). Just as a thesis statement includes an idea that controls a document's focus, a topic sentence must also contain a controlling idea to direct the paragraph. Different writers may use the same main idea but can steer their paragraph in a number of different directions according to their stance on the subject. Read the following examples.

- Marijuana is a destructive influence on teens and causes long-term brain damage.
- The antinausea properties in marijuana are a lifeline for many cancer patients.
- Legalized marijuana creates a higher demand for Class A and Class B drugs.

Although the main idea—marijuana—is the same in all three topic sentences, the controlling idea differs depending on the writer's viewpoint.

Check Your Understanding: Identifying Main & Controlling Ideas

Identifying Main & Controlling Ideas (Text version)

Identify the **main idea** in the following topic sentences.

1. Raising the legal driving age to 21 would decrease road traffic accidents.
2. Exercising three times a week is the only way to maintain good physical health
3. Dog owners should be prohibited from taking their pets on public beaches.

Identify the **controlling idea** in the following topic sentence.

4. Sexism and racism are still rampant in today's workplace.
5. Owning a business is the only way to achieve financial success.

Check your answers: ¹

Activity source: “[Self Practice 3.9](#)” by Brenna Clarke Gray (H5P Adaptation) [Writing for Success – 1st Canadian Edition](#) by Tara Harkoff & [author removed], licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). / Interactive content extracted to plain text.

Characteristics of a Good Topic Sentence

Five characteristics define a good topic sentence:

1. A good topic sentence provides an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.

Weak example. People rarely give firefighters the credit they deserve for such a physically and emotionally demanding job. (The paragraph is about a specific incident that involved firefighters; therefore, this topic sentence is too general.)

Stronger example. During the October riots, Unit 3B went beyond the call of duty. (This topic sentence is more specific and indicates that the paragraph will contain information about a particular incident involving Unit 3B.)

2. A good topic sentence contains both a topic and a controlling idea or opinion.

Weak example. In this paper, I am going to discuss the rising suicide rate among young professionals. (This topic sentence provides a main idea, but it does not present a controlling idea, or thesis.)

Stronger example. The rising suicide rate among young professionals is a cause for immediate concern. (This topic sentence presents the writer’s opinion on the subject of rising suicide rates among young professionals.)

3. A good topic sentence is clear and easy to follow.

Weak example. In general, writing an essay, thesis, or other academic or nonacademic document is considerably easier and of much higher quality if you first construct an outline, of which there are many different types. (This topic sentence includes a main idea and a controlling thesis, but both are buried beneath the confusing sentence structure and unnecessary vocabulary. These obstacles make it difficult for the reader to follow.)

Stronger example. Most forms of writing can be improved by first creating an outline. (This topic sentence cuts out unnecessary verbiage and simplifies the previous statement, making it easier for the reader to follow.)

4. A good topic sentence does not include supporting details.

Weak example. Salaries should be capped in baseball for many reasons, most importantly so we don’t allow the same team to win year after year. (This topic sentence includes a supporting detail that should be included later in the paragraph to back up the main point.)

Stronger example. Introducing a salary cap would improve the game of baseball for many reasons. (This topic sentence omits the additional supporting detail so that it can be expanded upon later in the paragraph.)

5. A good topic sentence engages the reader by using interesting vocabulary. **Weak example.** The military deserves better equipment. (This topic sentence includes a main idea and a controlling thesis, but the language is bland and unexciting.) **Stronger example.** The appalling lack of resources provided to the military is outrageous and requires our immediate attention. (This topic sentence reiterates the same idea and controlling thesis, but adjectives such as *appalling* and *immediate* better engage the reader. These words also indicate the writer’s tone.)

Watch It: How to Write a Topic Sentence

[Watch How to write a topic sentence \(2 mins\) on YouTube](#)

Check Your Understanding: Topic Sentence strength

Read each of the examples below and decide whether it is a strong or weak topic sentence based on the criteria listed above. Then click on the sentence to find out if you are on the right track.

The growth of e-sports will benefit parks and recreation departments by increasing the use of services by hard to reach audiences.

Weak! This topic sentence has both a topic (the growth of e-sports) and a controlling idea (it will benefit parks and recreation departments), but it also includes unnecessary supporting detail. The way e-sports will be a benefit should be explained in the paragraph's body. It does not need to be stated in the topic sentence itself.

Contrary to common fears, automation creates new jobs, many of which are far more glamorous than their predecessors.

Strong! This topic sentence contains a topic (automation), a controlling idea (it creates new jobs), and it uses interesting and engaging vocabulary that makes the reader want to know more.

A key factor of McDonald's' success has been the company's worldwide creation of employment opportunity.

Strong! This topic sentence leaves no doubt what the paragraph will discuss. It will explain how McDonald's has been successful (topic) in part because of the creation of employment opportunity (controlling idea). Not a lot of room for confusion here!

Periodontal disease affects the gums and tissues surrounding the teeth, and people who use tobacco may present with bleeding and gum pain after eating, brushing and flossing.

Weak! This topic sentence is not very easy to follow. It has a topic (periodontal disease) and a controlling idea (the disease affects tobacco users), but the idea is not clearly stated nor connected to the topic. It could be clarified by saying, “Periodontal disease is prevalent in tobacco users.”

This paragraph will discuss the history of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Weak! This sentence has a topic (the history of the Commission) but not a controlling idea. What point is the paragraph going to make? Using a phrase like “This paragraph will...” or “In this essay, I will...” means that a point has not been established. Improve the sentence by saying something like, “Establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was an important first step in healing the trauma created by the residential school system.”

Activity Source: “Is the topic sentence WEAK or STRONG?” by Emily Cramer is licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

Check Your Understanding: Effective Topic Sentences

Effective Topic Sentences (Text version)

Choose the most effective topic sentence from the following sentence pairs.

1. a. To boost their chances of winning the next election, the Liberals need to listen to public opinion. OR
b. This paper will discuss the likelihood of the Liberals winning the next election.
2. a. Union workers are crippling the economy because companies are unable to remain competitive as a result of added financial pressure. OR
b. The unrealistic demands of union workers are crippling the economy for three main reasons.
3. a. Authors are losing money as a result of technological advances. OR

- b. The introduction of new technology will devastate the literary world.
- 4. a. This essay will consider whether talent is required in the rap music industry. OR
- b. Rap music is produced by untalented individuals with oversized egos.

Check your answers:²

Activity source: “Self Practice 3.10” by Brenna Clarke Gray (H5P Adaptation) [Writing for Success – 1st Canadian Edition](#) by Tara Harkoff & [author removed], licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

Check Your Understanding: Creating Topic Sentences

Using the tips on developing effective topic sentences in this section, create a topic sentence on each of the following subjects. Remember to include a controlling idea as well as a main idea. Write your responses on your own sheet of paper.

1. An endangered species
2. The cost of fuel
3. The legal drinking age
4. A controversial film or novel

Writing at Work

When creating a workplace document, use the “top-down” approach—keep the topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph so that readers immediately understand the gist of the message. This method saves busy colleagues precious time and effort trying to figure out the main points and relevant details.

Headings are another helpful tool. In a text-heavy document, break up each paragraph with

individual headings. These serve as useful navigation aids, enabling colleagues to skim through the document and locate paragraphs that are relevant to them.

Developing Paragraphs That Use Topic Sentences, Supporting Ideas, and Transitions Effectively

Learning how to develop a good topic sentence is the first step toward writing a solid paragraph. Once you have composed your topic sentence, you have a guideline for the rest of the paragraph. To complete the paragraph, a writer must support the topic sentence with additional information and summarize the main point with a concluding sentence.

This section identifies the three major structural parts of a paragraph and covers how to develop a paragraph using transitional words and phrases.

Identifying Parts of a Paragraph

An effective paragraph contains three main parts: a topic sentence, the body, and the concluding sentence. A topic sentence is often the first sentence of a paragraph. This chapter has already discussed its purpose—to express a main idea combined with the writer’s attitude about the subject. The body of the paragraph usually follows, containing supporting details. Supporting sentences help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. The concluding sentence is the last sentence in the paragraph. It reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words.



Imagine the parts as a burger: topic sentence is the top bun, supporting details are the burger toppings (lettuce, tomato, meat), colourful vocabulary are the condiments (mustard, ketchup, relish), and concluding sentence is the bottom bun. [Photo](#) by [Enokson](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Figure 2.2 Paragraph Structure Graphic Organizer

Paragraph Structure Graphic Organizer

Topic Sentence
(main idea + personal opinion)

Body

Supporting Sentence

Supporting Sentence

Supporting Sentence

Supporting Sentence

Conclusion
(summary of main idea + personal opinion)

Concluding Sentence

[Download/Access a text version of this worksheet \[Word file\]](#)

Read the following paragraph. The topic sentence (the first one in the paragraph) is underlined for you.

After reading the new TV guide this week I had just one thought—why are we still being bombarded with reality shows? This season, the plague of reality television continues to darken our airwaves. Along with the return of viewer favourites, we are to be cursed with yet another mindless creation. *Prisoner* follows the daily lives of eight suburban housewives who have chosen to be put in jail for the purposes of this fake psychological experiment. A preview for the first episode shows the usual tears and tantrums associated with reality television. I dread to think what producers will come up with next season, but if any of them are reading this blog—stop it! We've had enough reality television to last us a lifetime!

It tells the reader that the paragraph will be about reality television shows, and it expresses the writer's distaste for these shows through the use of the word *bombarded*.

Each of the following sentences in the paragraph supports the topic sentence by providing further information about a specific reality television show. The final sentence is the concluding sentence. It reiterates the main point that viewers are bored with reality television shows by using different words from the topic sentence.

Paragraphs that begin with the topic sentence move from the general to the specific. They open with a general statement about a subject (reality shows) and then discuss specific examples (the reality show *Prisoner*). Most academic essays contain the topic sentence at the beginning of the first paragraph.

Now take a look at the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

Last year, a cat traveled 130 kilometers to reach its family, who had moved to another province and left their pet behind. Even though it had never been to their new home, the cat was able to track down its former owners. A dog in my neighborhood can predict when its master is about to have a seizure. It makes sure that he does not hurt himself during an epileptic fit. Compared to many animals, our own senses are almost dull.

The last sentence of this paragraph, “Compared to many animals, our own senses are almost dull.”, is the topic sentence. It draws on specific examples (a cat that tracked down its owners and a dog that can predict seizures) and then makes a general statement that draws a conclusion from these examples (animals’ senses are better than humans’). In this case, the supporting sentences are placed before the topic sentence and the concluding sentence is the same as the topic sentence.

This technique is frequently used in *persuasive* writing. The writer produces detailed examples as evidence to back up his or her point, preparing the reader to accept the concluding topic sentence as the truth.

Sometimes, the topic sentence appears in the middle of a paragraph. Read the following example.

For many years, I suffered from severe anxiety every time I took an exam. Hours before the exam, my heart would begin pounding, my legs would shake, and sometimes I would become physically unable to move. **Last year, I was referred to a specialist and finally found a way to control my anxiety—breathing exercises.** It seems so simple, but by doing just a few breathing exercises a couple of hours before an exam, I gradually got my anxiety under control. The exercises help slow my heart rate

and make me feel less anxious. Better yet, they require no pills, no equipment, and very little time. It's amazing how just breathing correctly has helped me learn to manage my anxiety symptoms.

In this paragraph, the sentence in bold, “Last year, I was referred to a specialist and finally found a way to control my anxiety—breathing exercises.”, is the topic sentence. It expresses the main idea—that breathing exercises can help control anxiety. The preceding sentences enable the writer to build up to their main point (breathing exercises can help control anxiety) by using a personal anecdote (how the writer used to suffer from anxiety). The supporting sentences then expand on how breathing exercises help the writer by providing additional information. The last sentence is the concluding sentence and restates how breathing can help manage anxiety.

Placing a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph is often used in creative writing. If you notice that you have used a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph in an academic essay, read through the paragraph carefully to make sure that it contains only one major topic.

Check Your Understanding: Identifying Topic, Supporting & Concluding Sentences

Identifying Topic, Supporting & Concluding Sentences (Text version)

Read the following passage:

The desert provides a harsh environment in which few mammals are able to adapt. Of these hardy creatures, the kangaroo rat is possibly the most fascinating. Able to live in some of the most arid parts of the southwest, the kangaroo rat neither sweats nor pants to keep cool. Its specialized kidneys enable it to survive on a minuscule amount of water. Unlike other desert creatures, the kangaroo rat does not store water in its body but instead is able to convert the dry seeds it eats into moisture. Its ability to adapt to such a hostile environment makes the kangaroo rat a truly amazing creature.

1. Identify the topic sentence:

- a. Of these hardy creatures, the kangaroo rat is possibly the most fascinating.
- b. Its ability to adapt to such a hostile environment makes the kangaroo rat a truly amazing creature.

2. **Identify one example of a supporting sentence:**

- a. Its ability to adapt to such a hostile environment makes the kangaroo rat a truly amazing creature.
- b. The desert provides a harsh environment in which few mammals are able to adapt.
- c. Able to live in some of the most arid parts of the southwest, the kangaroo rat neither sweats nor pants to keep cool.

3. **Identify the concluding sentences:**

- a. Its specialized kidneys enable it to survive on a minuscule amount of water.
- b. Its ability to adapt to such a hostile environment makes the kangaroo rat a truly amazing creature.

Check your answers:³

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Supporting Sentences

If you think of a paragraph as a hamburger, the supporting sentences are the meat inside the bun. They make up the body of the paragraph by explaining, proving, or enhancing the controlling idea in the topic sentence. Most paragraphs contain three to six supporting sentences depending on the audience and purpose for writing. A supporting sentence usually offers one of the following:

- **Reason Sentence:** The refusal of the baby boom generation to retire is contributing to the current lack of available jobs.
- **Fact**

Sentence: Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.

- **Statistic**

Sentence: Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.

- **Quotation Sentence:** “We will not allow this situation to continue,” stated Senator Johns.
- **Example Sentence:** Last year, Bill was asked to retire at the age of fifty-five.

The type of supporting sentence you choose will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing. For example, if you are attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position you should rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions. Read the following example:

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. **(Topic sentence)**

First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. **(Supporting sentence 1: statistic)**

Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. **(Supporting sentence 2: fact)**

Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. **(Supporting sentence 3: reason)**

Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. **(Supporting sentence 4: example)**

“It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,” she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas powered vehicles I’ve owned.” **(Supporting sentence 5: quotation)**

Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future. **(Concluding sentence)**

To find information for your supporting sentences, you might consider using one of the following sources:

- Reference book
- Website
- Biography/autobiography
- Map
- Dictionary
- Newspaper/magazine
- Interview
- Previous experience
- Personal research

To read more about sources and research, see “[Unit 4: Research Skills](#)”.

Tip

When searching for information on the internet, remember that some websites are more reliable than others. Websites ending in .gov or .edu are generally more reliable than websites ending in .com or .org. Wikis and blogs are not reliable sources of information because they are subject to inaccuracies.

Concluding Sentences

An effective concluding sentence draws together all the ideas you have raised in your paragraph. It reminds readers of the main point—the topic sentence—without restating it in exactly the same words. Using the hamburger example, the top bun (the topic sentence) and the bottom bun (the concluding sentence) are very similar. They frame the “meat” or body of the paragraph. Compare the topic sentence and concluding sentence from the previous example:

Topic sentence: There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car.

Concluding sentence: Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

Notice the use of the synonyms *advantages* and *benefits*. The concluding sentence reiterates the idea that owning a hybrid is advantageous without using the exact same words. It also summarizes two examples of the advantages covered in the supporting sentences: low running costs and environmental benefits.

You should avoid introducing any new ideas into your concluding sentence. A conclusion is intended to provide the reader with a sense of completion. Introducing a subject that is not covered in the paragraph will confuse the reader and weaken your writing.

A concluding sentence may do any of the following:

- Restate the main idea.

Example: Childhood obesity is a growing problem in Canada.

- Summarize the key points in the paragraph.

Example: A lack of healthy choices, poor parenting, and an addiction to video games are among the many factors contributing to childhood obesity.

- Draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph.

Example: These statistics indicate that unless we take action, childhood obesity rates will continue to rise.

- Make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph.

Example: Based on this research, more than 60 percent of children in Canada will be morbidly obese by the year 2030 unless we take evasive action.

- Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.

Example: Childhood obesity is an entirely preventable tragedy.

Check Your Understanding: Self Practice

Check Your Understanding: Self Practice (Text version)

1. The concluding sentence is a good place to introduce a new idea, because readers find that engaging. True or False?
2. Fill in the missing words to complete the metaphor.
If a paragraph is a hamburger, the topic sentence is the (a)_____ bun and the concluding sentence is the (b)_____ bun. This makes the body of the paragraph the (c) _____ (unless you prefer a veggie burger).
3. Match the type of concluding sentence (A) to the best example (B)
 - A. Type of sentence:
 - a. Restate the main idea.
 - b. Summarize the key points in the paragraph
 - c. Make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph.
 - d. Draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph.
 - e. Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.
 - B. Examples:

1. These examples from recent research show how criminalizing drugs has not protected communities or served individual drug users.
2. The war on drugs has not resulted in a reduction in suffering.
3. Given all we know about outcome of failed drug policy, the next step is to consider decriminalization.
4. The war on drugs has damaged society because it has resulted in a more dangerous drug supply and a criminalized population.
5. The traumas and violence inflicted by the war on drugs could have been prevented.

Check your answers: ⁴

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Transitions

A strong paragraph moves seamlessly from the topic sentence into the supporting sentences and on to the concluding sentence. To help organize a paragraph and ensure that ideas logically connect to one another, writers use transitional words and phrases. A transition is a connecting word that describes a relationship between ideas. Take another look at the earlier example:

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the litre than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. “It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,” she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I’ve owned.” Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

Each of the underlined words (*first*, *second* and *because*) is a transition word. Words such as *first* and *second* are transition words that show sequence or clarify order. They help organize the writer’s ideas by showing

that he or she has another point to make in support of the topic sentence. Other transition words that show order include *third*, *also*, and *furthermore*.

The transition word *because* is a transition word of consequence that continues a line of thought. It indicates that the writer will provide an explanation of a result. In this sentence, the writer explains why hybrid cars will reduce dependency on fossil fuels (because they do not require gas). Other transition words of consequence include *as a result*, *so that*, *since*, or *for this reason*.

To include a summarizing transition in her concluding sentence, the writer could rewrite the final sentence as follows:

In conclusion, given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

The following lists provide some useful transition words to connect supporting sentences and concluding sentences.

Examples of transition words

For Supporting Sentences:

- above all, but, for instance, in particular, moreover, subsequently, also, conversely, furthermore, later on, nevertheless, therefore, aside from, correspondingly, however, likewise, on one hand, to begin with, at the same time, for example, in addition, meanwhile, on the contrary...

For Concluding sentences:

- after all, all things considered, in brief, in summary, on the whole, to sum up, all in all, finally, in conclusion, on balance, thus...

Check Your Understanding: Practice What You've Learned About Paragraphs

Practice What You've Learned About Paragraphs (Text version)

For this exercise, you will draft a paragraph after spending some time reflecting on the criteria for good paragraphs that you learned about in this chapter. You can choose any topic you like for your paragraph—maybe there's something you're thinking about for this or another class that would benefit from some time to do some writing about—but if you need help with a prompt, consider writing about one of the issues in this chapter or answer one of these questions:

- Can online friendships be as meaningful as offline ones?
- Is college or university always the right decision for people leaving high school?
- What can people do to manage their stress levels?

You don't need to do research to approach this exercise (though you are welcome to, if you wish!). Instead, your own personal experience will be sufficient here.

Remember:

- The foundation of a good paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence relates to the thesis, or main point, of the essay and guides the reader by signposting what the paragraph is about. All the sentences in the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence.
- Most paragraphs contain three to six supporting sentences depending on the audience and purpose for writing.
- An effective concluding sentence draws together all the ideas you have raised in your paragraph. It reminds readers of the main point—the topic sentence—without restating it in exactly the same words. Using the hamburger example, the top bun (the topic sentence) and the bottom bun (the concluding sentence) are very similar. They frame the “meat” or body of the paragraph.

Key paragraph details

Here you will reflect on what makes a good paragraph before you take a run at it yourself. Remember, a good paragraph has the following criteria:

- A topic sentence (that makes a claim/states an opinion!).

- A concluding sentence.
- Appropriate supporting details.
- Use of transitional words/phrases.

In the exercise below, click on the “criteria” button and make notes for yourself about how you can address the key criteria for paragraphs. Try make four points: one for each key element your paragraph needs to have.

Paragraph composition

Based on the criteria you outlined on the previous page, draft a paragraph.

Review criteria and details

Rate how well you’ve achieved each of the criteria, and reflect on how you can strengthen the thesis statement.

- Doesn’t meet criteria.
- Meets criteria partially.
- Strongly meets criteria.

Save your file and consider sharing with a classmate for feedback.

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Writing at Work

Transitional words and phrases are useful tools to incorporate into workplace documents. They guide the reader through the document, clarifying relationships between sentences and paragraphs so that the reader understands why they have been written in that particular order.

For example, when writing an instructional memo, it may be helpful to consider the following transitional words and phrases: *before you begin, first, next, then, finally, after you have completed*. Using these transitions as a template to write your memo will provide readers with clear, logical instructions about a particular process and the order in which steps are supposed to be completed

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this section is adapted from “[2.5 – Effective Means For Writing A Paragraph](#)” In *Communication Essentials for College* by Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). An adaptation from ” [6.2 Effective means for writing a paragraph](#)” In *Writing for Success* by University of Minnesota licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). / Adaptations include updates for accessibility and images for visual appeal.

Notes

- | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. | 1. Legal driving age | 5. Financial success | meat/patty, 3. (c), |
| | 2. Exercising | 6. 1. a, 2. a, 3. a, 4. b | 3. 1 (d), 2. (a), (b), 5. (e). |
| | 3. Dog owners | 7. 1. a, 2.c, 3. b | |
| | 4. Still rampant in today's workplaces | 8. 1. False 2. a. top, b. bottom, c. | |

DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPHS

A descriptive paragraph provides a vibrant experience for the reader through vivid language and descriptions of something. Unlike narrative paragraphs, which must include personal thoughts, feelings, and growth, descriptive paragraphs do not need to be personal in nature. Instead, descriptive paragraphs must focus on vividly and objectively describing something to the reader. In order to provide this vivid detail, the writer must use language that appeals to the reader's five senses: sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch. To appeal to these senses, the writer must use descriptive language, usually in the form of adjectives, that describes the sensations felt by the senses. For instance, examine the differences between the descriptions below:

Sentence 1: The tree was tall and green.

Sentence 2: The soft and damp pink flowers of the dogwood tree smelled sweet in the cool spring air as the wind whistled through its yellow-green leaves.

How do these descriptions compare? If these two sentences both describe the same tree, which sentence provides a better picture for the reader? Why?

While the first description does provide some detail (that the tree is both “tall” and “green”), it does not help the reader picture the tree. Saying that the tree is “tall” and “green” does not help separate the tree being described from any other tree. The second sentence, however, provides the reader with descriptive information that makes the tree unique. Unlike the writer of the first sentence, who only vaguely describes how the tree looked, the writer of the second sentence appeals to at least four of the reader's five senses. This writer describes how the tree feels (soft and damp), how the tree smells (sweet), how the tree sounds (it whistles), and how the tree looks (pink and yellow-green). Through these descriptions, the reader can see, hear, feel, and smell the tree while reading the sentence. However, in some instances, not all of the senses will be applicable for the description. In this case, most descriptions of trees would not include a sense of how the tree tasted, especially when so many trees are inedible or poisonous!

Table 1: Words associated with each of the five senses

See	Hear	Smell	Taste	Feel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • colours (green, blue, red) • contrast (light vs. dark) • depth (near vs. far) • texture (rough, pebbly, smooth) • shape (round, square, triangular) • dimensions (height, width, length) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loud • grating • metallic • atonal • melodic • euphonious • discordant • screeching • gravelly • harmonious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sweet • pungent • acrid • delicious • disgusting • appetizing • fresh • stale • fruity • tantalizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delicious • sour • sweet • savoury • salty • spoiled • bitter • earthy • spicy • bland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • soft • creamy • rubbery • firm • cool/hot • unctuous • porous/smooth • knobby • sticky • dry/moist

Providing good details in a descriptive paragraph also rests on the idea that a writer must *show* and not *tell* the reader. While good details in a paragraph are important, the most essential part of a descriptive paragraph is the reason for writing the paragraph. Since descriptive paragraphs should explain to the reader the importance of what is being described, in addition to helping the reader picture it, the author must show the reader how and why something is significant rather than simply telling the reader. A good writer helps the reader picture what they are describing; however, a better writer shows the reader the purpose or reason for describing something. Consider the differences between the sentences below:

Example 1: Ever since grade school, I have always been nervous during tests.

Example 2: Staring blankly at my exam, I tapped my pencil rapidly on the side of my desk and desperately tried to focus. Mustering up some courage, I wrote an answer to the second question. Just as quickly, I erased the answer frantically, not wanting to leave a trace of it on the blank white paper. As the teacher announced that time was almost up, I remembered the taunt of my evil grade-school teacher: “You’ll never pass this test. Just give up already.” The memory of her words paralyzed my mind. Even more panic-stricken than before, I stared wildly at my blank test, trying to remember what the teacher had said in class last week or what I had read in the textbook.

While the first example does not explain how the narrator is nervous, it also fails to show why this nervousness is important. Ultimately, the first example tells and does not show the reader how the narrator is nervous or why this reaction is important. Meanwhile, the second example not only shows how the narrator expresses this nervousness (tapping the pencil on the desk, erasing answers, etc.), it begins to show why this is significant by relating it to earlier experiences in the narrator’s life. Through this connection, the writer is beginning to develop the description and the importance of the test-taking nervousness. The second example describes the experiences from grade school that led to this current bout of test-taking anxiety.

By showing and not telling the reader and by using descriptive language that appeals to the five senses, descriptive paragraphs provide the reader with a detailed account and the significance of something. Thus,

this something being described is the most important aspect of the descriptive paragraph. Generally, descriptive paragraphs describe one of four things: a person, a place, an object, or an event.

Person

Like any other descriptive paragraph, the most important aspect of a person paragraph is the reason for writing it. Have you ever read a book or article for school wondering what the point is? Perhaps even feeling disinterested because of what you felt was a lack of point or reason for reading or even writing the book, poem, article, etc.? Essentially, the same can be true for your own paragraphs if you do not write with a purpose. In choosing the person you want to write about, you have a reason for the choice you have made. It is your job as the writer to show the reader your point. Why have you chosen this person instead of another? What makes them interesting? You must draw your readers into your paragraph just as every other author draws their readers into their work, even if your only audience is your instructor. Remember, instructors do not like reading pointless writing any more than you do!

Thus, whenever writing a descriptive paragraph about a person, you must ask yourself: Why did I choose this person? What makes this person special? Is it a memory? Which of this person's characteristics has inspired me to write about them? In answering these questions, you not only find the reason or purpose for writing your paragraph, but you also inadvertently discover how to format your paragraph as well. Generally, paragraphs can be formatted in a number of different ways. The formatting of a paragraph rests almost entirely on what you are trying to do or say within your writing. For instance, let us consider the answer to some of the questions provided above.

Imagine that you have decided to write your descriptive paragraph about your aunt because you spent your summers with her when you were younger. Let's say that, during one of your visits, she taught you how to swim in the lake behind her house, and this is one of the fondest memories from your childhood. In this case, your descriptive paragraph would be a chronological account of this experience. You would organize your paragraph around the experience by having an introductory and concluding sentence that indicate the topic and purpose of your paragraph while detailing the event in the body of the paragraph. For instance, in a descriptive paragraph about your aunt, the introductory and concluding sentence would indicate that this memory was the highlight of your childhood while the body sentences would describe the event in chronological order. Since this is a descriptive paragraph about a person and not an event, you must be sure to centre your discussion of the event on the person involved; the person who made the event special.

However, you could also write a descriptive paragraph about your aunt that details some of your favourite characteristics about her. Perhaps you want your paragraph to describe a few reasons why your aunt is your favourite relative. In this paragraph, you would focus on the several characteristics that show why your aunt is so important to you. To do so, you may choose to explain briefly an event that supports one characteristic. For instance, if you want to show that your aunt is spontaneous and that this is one of your favourite things about her, you may choose to describe a day when she woke you up early to go on an unplanned, spur-of-the-

moment trip to the beach. Through describing this event in one of your body sentences, you help support your claim that your aunt is spontaneous.

Table 2 Examples of different ways to organize information about a person

Focus of the paragraph	What will the paragraph talk about?	How to organize the paragraph
An event	The summer your aunt taught you to swim is one of your fondest childhood memories.	You would organize your paragraph around this event and how it has made your aunt more important to you.
Personal characteristics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. spontaneous 2. fun-loving 3. easygoing 	You would organize your paragraph around the main reasons why your aunt is your favourite relative with each of these characteristics serving as a sentence.

Place

Much like a person descriptive paragraph, the most important aspect of a descriptive paragraph about a place is your reason for writing it. Consider all of the places you have been to in your life—not only the places you have visited on vacation, but also those that you visit in everyday life. Every day, or at least during the school week, how many different places do you go? After leaving home, do you stop to get breakfast or coffee along the way, or do you stop and pick up a friend? Do you spend the majority of your day at school? If so, do you leave campus to get lunch? How about after later in the day? Do you go straight home? Go to the gym? Pick your kids up from school? Considering all the places you visit in one day, which would you pick to write about and why? These are the most important questions to answer when writing your place descriptive paragraph, and answering them will help you decide the organization of your paragraph.

The organization of a descriptive paragraph about a place is much like that of a descriptive paragraph about a person. Thus, there are two main organizational schemes that you can choose from when composing a descriptive paragraph about a place: one that focuses on certain characteristics of the place, or one that focuses on a specific event (or set of events) related to the place. For instance, for the first type of organization, you would focus on the reasons—or characteristics—why you like or dislike a place. For the second type, you would focus on the events that explain why this place is important to you. For example, if you were writing a descriptive paragraph about Barkerville, Table 3 describes the two ways in which you could organize your paragraph.

Table 3 Examples of different ways to organize information about a place

Focus of the paragraph	What will the paragraph talk about?	How to organize the paragraph
An event	A high school trip you took with your grade 11 history class to learn about the history of the gold rush in British Columbia.	You would organize your paragraph around this event and how it sparked your interest in museums.
Characteristics of a place	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Actors 2. Story telling 3. Historic buildings 	You would organize your paragraph around the main reasons why you enjoyed Barkerville with each of these characteristics serving as a body sentence.

While it may not matter which type or organization you choose, you must always make the place the focus of your paper. Thus, be sure the events or characteristics you describe in the paragraph do not outshine the importance of the place they are describing. For instance, following the example above, when talking about listening to the actors at Barkerville, do not focus too much on tours you have experienced at other museums. While comparing the use of actors to give tours at Barkerville does stress how much better they are, do not let tours at other museums distract from your discussion of Barkerville. Additionally, remember to stress why the place being described is important to you regardless of the organizational scheme you choose.

Object

By now, you may have noticed a pattern when it comes to organizing a descriptive paragraph. As you remember, you organize a descriptive paragraph about a person or place based either upon the characteristics of the subject or an event associated with it, and an object descriptive paragraph is no exception to this pattern. When writing a descriptive paragraph about an object, you must first decide why you have chosen this specific object to write about. In answering this question, you will know how to organize your paragraph. If you decide that an object is important to you because of the characteristics the object possesses, then you would organize the body of your paragraph around these characteristics or reasons. However, if an object is important to you because it was part of a significant event in your life, then you would produce body sentences that explain the event in chronological order.

For instance, imagine you wanted to write a descriptive paragraph about a tree at a local park. Consider the two ways of organizing this paragraph described in Table 4.

Table 4 Examples of different ways to organize information about an object

Focus of the paragraph	What will the paragraph talk about?	How to organize the paragraph
An event	You shared your first kiss with your current partner under this tree.	You would organize your paragraph around this event and how it has made this tree more important to you.
Characteristics of an object	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. good for climbing 2. has a tire swing 3. displays the change in seasons 	You would organize your paragraph around the main reasons why this is your favourite tree with each of these characteristics serving as a body sentence.

Although the organizational scheme you choose rests solely on the content you intend to include, the object must be the focus of the paragraph. Make sure the characteristics of an object or the retelling of an event do not overshadow the impact of the object being described. For example, when describing the event of your first kiss, you would need to make sure that you did not spend too much of your paragraph focusing on your partner. Additionally, when writing about an event connected to the object, be sure to connect the event to the significance of the object so that the event itself does not outshine the object being described. In focusing on not only the organization of the paragraph but also the significance of the object, the object descriptive paragraph that you compose will stress both the description and importance of the object being described.

Event

Although the three previous types of descriptive paragraphs follow the same two organizational schemes, event descriptive paragraphs differ slightly. While other descriptive paragraphs either describe the person, place, or object in question or detail an event connected to it, event descriptive paragraphs chronologically describe an event from the past or from the future. Thus, descriptive paragraphs that focus on an event can either detail a memory that is significant or your hopes about an upcoming event. For instance, your event descriptive paragraph about a past event would describe a memory that is in some way important to you, be it positively or negatively. However, your event descriptive paragraph about a future event would describe something to occur in the future that you hope for or that you dread.

While the other descriptive paragraphs also employ organizational schemes that outline events connected to the subject, a descriptive paragraph about an event must focus on the event itself. For example, one could write a descriptive paragraph detailing the event of their high school graduation that could be based on a person, place, object, or event. If they wanted to stress a person through this event, they could write a paragraph that details how their graduation was important because it was the first time they saw their grandparents in ten years. If they wanted to stress a place, they could write a paragraph that details how important the park where the graduation took place is to them. If they wanted to stress an object through the event, they could write a paragraph that describes how important their high school diploma is to them.

However, if they wanted to stress the importance of the graduation, or the event itself, they could write a paragraph that describes how all the things listed above—their grandparents, the park, and their diploma—all make the event significant. The different approaches they could take to a paragraph about the graduation are detailed in Table 5.

Table 5 The significance of each paragraph type

Paragraph Type	Person	Place	Object	Event
Significance of Paragraph	Their grandparents are important to them because they came to the graduation.	The central park in their hometown is important to them because they graduated there.	Their diploma is important to them because it symbolizes their graduation.	Their graduation itself is important because it was the first time they saw their grandparents in ten years, at the central park in their hometown, and when they received their diploma.

Hence, while in the other descriptive paragraphs, you must never let the event overshadow the significance of the person, place, or object being described, in an event descriptive paragraph, you should focus on how the people, place, and objects surrounding the event make it important. In this way, an event descriptive paragraph is a lot like the person, place, and object paragraphs. Thus, think of the objects, people, and place of an event as the characteristics that make the event important to you whenever you are constructing an event descriptive paragraph.

Check Your Understanding: Writing Ideas

Person

1. Write a descriptive paragraph about a person in your family following one of the organizational schemes listed.
2. Write a descriptive paragraph about an important person in history using the event organization. Instead of indicating how the person is important to you, indicate how the person is important or significant within history.

Place

1. Write a descriptive paragraph about your hometown. Describe the town and indicate why it is important either to you or to society as a whole.
2. Write a descriptive paragraph about one of the original Coast Salish settlements at the time of first contact with European explorers. Describe the location and environment, paying close attention to how the structure of the settlement was a response to the coastal environment.

Object

1. Write a descriptive paragraph about a gift you received on your birthday. Remember you can arrange your paragraph according to the characteristics of the object or by detailing the event at which you received it.
2. Write a descriptive paragraph about the provincial flower, the trillium. Be sure to indicate why the flower is important to the province.

Event

1. Write a descriptive paragraph about a commemorative event that you attended or that you plan to attend in the future (wedding, memorial, graduation, etc.). Remember to include the people, location, or objects that make the event significant.
2. Write a descriptive paragraph about the next or last federal election, focusing on why this election is significant in Canada.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from “[3.1 Descriptive Paragraphs](#)” In *[Building Blocks of Academic Writing](#)* by Carellin Brooks, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). Change title of Review Questions to Writing Ideas.

NARRATIVE PARAGRAPHS

Unlike descriptive paragraphs—which strive to explain why a person, place, object, or event is important—a narrative paragraph demonstrates the development of a person through the chronological retelling of an important event. In addition, a narrative paragraph should indicate how a person has changed or learned from this experience. The experience should unfold much like the plot of a novel or short story, beginning with the individual facing a problem and ending in the resolution of the problem and subsequent growth of the individual. Thus, the action of the problem should unfold as the telling of the event unfolds, much like the action of a short story builds as the plot progresses.

However, just as in descriptive paragraphs, you must describe the event that is progressing, effectively drawing your readers into the development of the individual. Think of how invested—or perhaps uninvested—you become in the stories you read. Why do you connect with certain characters and not with others? Often, you connect with characters you feel you can relate to in some way or with events that you can imagine experiencing. Thus, it is essential to clearly and concisely indicate the action of the event being described. Your readers must be able to imagine being at and participating in the event. However, you must keep in mind that you can provide too much information to the reader. Make sure all the details you provide are relevant to the narration. For instance, when narrating an event, you do not need to include details that do not add to the feeling of an event. Otherwise, the readers will feel unconnected to and uninterested in the development of the individual.

While describing the event is crucial to the reader's understanding and interest, the subject's feelings, thoughts, desires, or insights are integral to creating the sense of personal growth. Without these components, the reader will be unable to track the person's development and change. Essentially, in order for the reader to see that the individual has transformed, you must present the inner thoughts, desires, and feelings of the person before and after the alleged transformation. This way, the reader can compare the thoughts and feelings from before the change with those after and ultimately evaluate the personal growth of the individual on their own.

Since the personal growth in the narrative is the most essential component, choosing the individual and experiences is an important decision. As a writer hoping to engage the reader, you must carefully consider both the events and the individual that you choose. Not only must you choose an event that points toward eventual personal growth, but you must also choose an individual who is compelling. Generally, a narrative paragraph can either be autobiographical or biographical in nature. That is, the narrative can be written by you and about you, or the narrative can be written by you and about someone else. Moreover, in choosing to write about yourself or about someone else, you decide the organization of your paragraph.

Autobiographical Narrative

An autobiographical narrative is one of the most personal types of paragraphs. Not only are you writing a paragraph that expresses your own views and thoughts, but autobiographical narratives are based upon your own life experiences.

Thus, it follows that the organization of the paragraph will also be more personal in nature. Unlike a narrative paragraph based on another individual, an autobiographical narrative will always contain your personal thoughts, desires, and motivations. While it is hard to know the motives of other individuals when writing a biographical narrative (unless you know the individual well), you always have access to the motivations for your own personal development. Hence, when you organize your autobiographical narrative, you must organize your paragraph around the event that promotes your personal growth and the feeling you experienced before, during, and after this event.

There are several ways to incorporate your thoughts, feelings, and motivations into the organization of your paragraph. First, you can consider integrating your description of certain events with your motives and thoughts for the events. This way, you present the event and your motivations both in chronological order and simultaneously. This means that you are describing the event and your feelings as they occurred, or at the same time. Second, you can consider blocking your description of your event and your feelings, providing a set of sentences describing the event followed by a set of sentences describing your motivations. You could also reverse this blocking format to first provide your motivations and then the description of the event.

Integrated description and motivations

Today, I stepped into a new stage of my life by moving into my own apartment. I am so excited because I have always lived with roommates, and this will be my first time living alone. I was able to find a great used couch on Facebook Marketplace that I have set up in the living room. My friends think living by myself will be lonely, but I am really enjoying setting up my place exactly how I want it. After we got everything moved in, I spent the afternoon rearranging furniture, putting dishes away, and hanging pictures.

Blocked descriptive and motivations

Today, I moved into my new apartment. We got up at 6 a.m. to load up the truck up with all of my stuff and drop it off at my new place. That took most of the morning. I was also able to find a used couch on Facebook

Marketplace, which we picked up and brought over. I spent the afternoon rearranging furniture, putting dishes away, and hanging pictures.

It was a very exciting day. I have always lived with roommates, so this will be my first time living alone. My friends think living by myself will be lonely, but now I can set up my place exactly how I want it. It feels like I am entering a new stage.

How do these two examples compare? Although they both narrate the same event, is one more effective than the other? Generally, the first organizational scheme (when you integrate description and motivations together) is the most seamless. By incorporating the two together, you provide the reader with a more complete picture of the event—as if the reader is experiencing the event as it unfolds in your narration. However, sometimes this formatting does not work, specifically with complicated events. If you feel that the event you are narrating is too difficult to explain or clarify, then you should consider separating your description and thoughts. However, you do need to be aware of how this affects the story you are telling. Do you want the importance of the event to be at the end? In doing so, you make the event seem more suspenseful, and you can make the reader more compelled to finish your narrative. Nevertheless, organizing your paper in this way places more of a burden on you as a writer because you must clearly connect the separate ideas in the paragraph.

Regardless of the organizational scheme you choose, you must properly describe your personal growth. In order to do so, you must organize your paragraph around one significant event. If your paragraph centres around one main event that helped shape your personal growth, the majority of the body should describe the one event while the introductory and concluding sentences should include your thoughts and feelings from before and after the event to help clarify how the occurrence helped shape you.

Biographical Narrative

Unlike the much more personal autobiographical narrative, a biographical narrative tends to be more formal and less personal. While you can easily include how you felt or what you thought during events in your own life, it is harder to indicate how others thought or felt during action in their own lives. Sometimes, if you are writing a biographical narrative about a close friend or relative, or if you have interviewed the individual you are writing about, you can include specific insights and motivations. If you do have access to the person's thoughts and feelings, you can easily organize your biographical narrative as you would an autobiographical one. However, usually, you will have to infer how a person felt or what they thought from their actions in certain events.

If you must write a biographical narrative about someone you do not know or someone you cannot interview, you must suggest the person's motivations through analyzing actions. For instance, if someone apologizes for past behaviour, then you can infer that they feel regret about the incident. You could then analyze the events following this apology to see if the individual's apology was genuine. In other words, you could see if the individual's behaviour changed after the apology or if the individual changed their actions in

significant ways. In order to vocalize the analysis in your paragraph, you must suggest to your reader that the individual started acting and behaving differently in response to a past experience. For example, you would need to stipulate that the good behaviour following the apology means that the individual regrets past actions. On the other hand, if an individual's actions after an apology do not change (if the person continues to make the same mistake, for instance), you can infer that the person does not regret or feel sorry for past actions.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from “[3.2 Narrative Paragraphs](#)” In *[Building Blocks of Academic Writing](#)* by Carellin Brooks, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). Adapted to remove review questions.

EXPOSITORY PARAGRAPHS

The main aim of an expository paragraph is to provide an effective explanation of a topic. While a descriptive paragraph strives to describe a subject and a narrative paragraph seeks to show personal growth, an expository paragraph tries to explain a topic or situation. Thus, expository paragraphs are written as if the writer is explaining or clarifying a topic to the reader. Since an expository paragraph is trying to clarify a topic, it is important that its sentences provide the categories or reasons that support the clarification of the topic. Moreover, these categories and reasons also provide the framework for the organization of the paragraph.

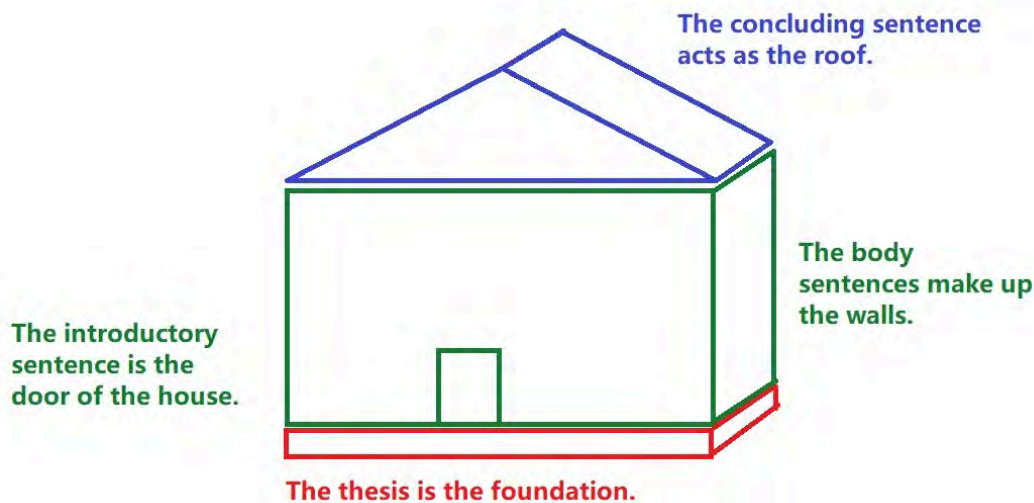


Figure 1: Components of the expository paragraph as the parts of a house.

Much like the categories are essential to clarifying the topic, organization is the key to any well-developed paragraph. When composing your paragraph, think of its organization as a house, with each major part of a house representing a component of a paragraph. Just as the foundation provides support on which a house can be built, a thesis represents the foundation upon which to build a paragraph. The introductory sentence then functions as both the door and the framework for an expository paragraph. Like a house door, the introductory sentence must allow the reader to enter the paragraph. Additionally, just as walls are built upon the framework of a house, the body sentences of a paragraph are organized around the framework or the organizational scheme that is presented in the introductory sentence. The body sentences, much like the walls of a house, must be firm, strong and complete. Finally, a paragraph must include a concluding sentence that tops off the paragraph, much like a roof completes a house. As the roof cements the structure of the house and helps hold the walls in place, the concluding sentence must sum up the point of your body sentences and complete the paragraph.

Although the overall organization of an expository paragraph is important, you must also understand the

organization of each component (the introductory, body, and concluding sentences) of your paragraph. The sections below identify the essential parts of each component of your paragraph, explaining the necessary information for each type of sentence.

While the guidelines listed below may feel constrictive, they are merely meant to guide you as a writer. Ultimately, the guidelines should help you write more effectively. The more familiar you become with how to organize a paragraph, the more energy you can focus on your ideas and your writing. As a result, your writing will improve as your ability to organize your ideas improves. Plus, focusing your energy on your argument and ideas rather than the organization makes your job as a writer more exciting and fun.

Introductory Sentences

A strong introductory sentence is crucial to the development of an effective expository paragraph. Unlike a persuasive paragraph, which takes a stand or forms an opinion about a subject, an expository paragraph is used when the writer wishes to explain or clarify a topic to the reader. In order to properly explain a topic, an expository paragraph breaks it into parts, explains each component in relation to the whole, and uses each component to justify the explanation of the topic. Thus, when writing an introductory sentence, it is crucial to include the explanation or clarification of the topic and the categories or components used to produce this explanation.

Introductory sentences

- Introduce the issue.
- Present the topic and its explanation or clarification.
- Provide the categories used to explain the topic.
- Provide the thesis statement.

Since the success of the paragraph rests on the introductory sentence, it is important to understand its essential components. Usually, when expository paragraphs fail to provide a clear explanation, it is not because the writer lacks explanations or clarifications, but rather because the explanations are not properly organized and identified in the introductory sentence. One of the most important jobs of an introductory sentence is that it introduces the topic or issue. Most explanations cannot be clarified without at least some background information. Thus, it is essential to provide a foundation for your topic before you begin explaining. For instance, if you wanted to explain what happened at the first Olympic Games, your introductory sentence would first need to briefly mention how the first games happened. In doing so, you

ensure that your audience is as informed about your topic as you are, and thus, you make it easier for your audience to understand your explanation.

Below, the main jobs of the introductory sentence are described and explained in detail.

The purposes of introductory sentences

Introductory sentences introduce the topic and suggest why it is important.

Example: An analysis of the essay exam results of the new English class shows that the new class format promotes close reading and better essay organization.

This sentence tells the reader both that the topic of the paper will be the benefits of the new English class and that the significance of these benefits is the improvement of close reading and essay organization.

Introductory sentences outline the structure of the paragraph and highlight the main ideas.

Example: Considering the results of the high school exit exam, it is apparent that the school curriculum is not properly addressing basic math skills, such as fractions, percentages and long division.

This sentence indicates the main ideas (fractions, percentages and long division) of the paragraph and indicates the order in which they will be presented in the body sentences.

Introductory sentences state the thesis.

Example: University and college work experience programs will require all students to take a résumé and cover letter writing workshop in order to better prepare them for employment.

This thesis statement indicates the explanation of the paragraph.

In addition to introducing the topic of your paragraph, your introductory sentence also needs to introduce each of the points you will cover in your body sentences. By providing your audience with an idea of the points you will make in your paragraph, your introductory sentence serves as a guide map, not only for your audience, but also for you. Including your main points in your introductory sentence not only allows your audience to understand where your paragraph is headed, but also helps you as a writer remember how you want to organize your paragraph. This is especially helpful if you are not writing your paragraph in one sitting, as it allows you to leave and return to your paragraph without forgetting all of the important points you wanted to make.

Table 1: Dos and don'ts of introductions

Things to always do	Things to never do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture the interest of your reader. • Introduce the issue to the reader. • State the problem simply. • Write in an intelligible, concise manner. • Refute any counterpoints. • State the thesis, preferably in one arguable statement. • Provide each of the arguments that will be presented in each of the body sentences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologize: Do not suggest that you are unfamiliar with the topic. (Example: <i>I cannot be certain, but ...</i>) • Use sweeping generalizations. (Example: <i>All men like football ...</i>) • Use a dictionary definition. (Example: <i>According to the dictionary, a humble person is ...</i>) • Announce your intentions: Do not directly state what you will be writing about. (Example: <i>In this paper, I will ...</i>)

Most importantly, when writing an introductory sentence, it is essential to remember that you must capture the interest of your reader. Thus, it is your job as the writer to make the introduction entertaining or intriguing. In order to do so, consider using a quotation, a surprising or interesting fact, an anecdote, or a humorous story. While the quotation, story, or fact you include must be relevant to your paragraph, placing one of these at the beginning of your introduction helps you not only capture the attention of the reader, but also introduce your topic and argument, making your introduction interesting to your audience and useful for your argument and paragraph.

Body Sentences

In an expository paragraph, the body sentences are where the writer has the opportunity to explain or clarify their viewpoint. By the concluding sentence, the writer should adequately clarify the topic for the reader. Regardless of a strong thesis statement that properly indicates the major subtopics of the paragraph, paragraphs with weak body sentences fail to properly explain the topic and indicate why it is important. Body sentences of an expository paragraph are weak when no examples are used to help illuminate the topic being discussed or when they are poorly organized. Occasionally, body sentences are also weak because the quotes used complicate rather than simplify the explanation. Thus, it is essential to use appropriate support and to adequately explain your support within your body sentences.

In order to create a body sentence that is properly supported and explained, it is important to understand the components that make up a strong body sentence. The bullet points below indicate the essential components of a well-written, well-argued body sentence.

Body sentences

- Begin by reflecting the argument of the thesis statement.
- Support the argument with useful and informative quotes from sources such as books, journal articles, expert opinions, etc.
- Briefly explain each quote and indicate its significance.
- Ensure that the information provided is relevant to the thesis statement.
- Transition into the next body sentence.

Just as your introduction must introduce the topic of your paragraph, the first body sentence must introduce the main subpoint for that sentence. For instance, if you were writing a body sentence for a paragraph explaining the factors that led to Canadian conscription in World War II, one body sentence could discuss the impact of Canada's relationship with Britain on the decision to conscript Canadian men. To do so, you would begin by explaining why Canada felt obliged to come to Britain's aid. Your audience now knows what the paragraph is explaining, and you can also keep track of your ideas.

Following the topic sentence, you must provide some sort of fact that supports your claim. In the example of the World War II paragraph, maybe you would provide a quote from a historian. After your quote or fact, you must always explain what the quote or fact is saying, stressing what you believe is most important about your fact. It is important to remember that your audience may read a quote and decide it is indicating something entirely different than what you think it is explaining. Or, maybe some of your readers think another aspect of your quote is important. If you do not explain the quote and indicate what portion of it is relevant to your clarification, then your reader may become confused or may be unconvinced by your explanation. Consider the possible interpretations for the statement below.

Example: While Canada's involvement in World War II did not lead to as many young men dying as in Britain, a generation was still deeply affected.

Interestingly, this statement seems to be saying two things at once: that Canada's young men were not killed in the same numbers as those of other Allied countries, and that the number of deaths nonetheless marked a generation. On the one hand, the historian seems to say that the two outcomes are not directly linked. On the other hand, the historian also indicates that the two outcomes are linked in that the deaths caused Canada to be impacted by the war. Because of the tension in this quotation, if you used it for your World War II paragraph, you would need to explain that the significant portion of the quote is the assertion that links the outcomes.

In addition to explaining what this quote is saying, you would also need to indicate why this is important to your explanation. When trying to indicate the significance of a fact, it is essential to try to answer the "so

what.” Imagine you have just finished explaining your quote to someone and they have asked you “so what?” The person does not understand why you have explained this quote, not because you have not explained the quote well, but because you have not told them why they need to know what the quote means. This—the answer to the “so what”—is the significance of your paragraph and is essentially your clarification within the body sentences.

Concluding Sentences

The concluding sentence of an expository paragraph is an author’s last chance to create a good impression. Hence, it is important to restate the thesis statement at the beginning of the sentence in order to remind the reader of your topic and explanation. Since it is at the end of the paragraph, the concluding sentence also should add a sense of closure and finality to the clarification of the paragraph. It is important to re-emphasize the main idea without being repetitive or introducing an entirely new idea or subtopic. While your concluding sentence can suggest further research or investigation, do not make this question the focus of the sentence. Thus, you should briefly and concisely reiterate the strongest clarifications of the paragraph, reminding the reader of the validity of your thesis or explanation and bringing closure to your paragraph.

The following is an example of a paragraph that describes why graduating from college is harder than graduating from high school. The paragraph has been broken up to describe the purpose of each sentence (or group of sentences).

Table 2: An example paragraph

Purpose	Example
Topic sentence	There are several reasons why graduating from college is harder than graduating from high school; however, the most important reason is the lack of support.
Introduce and explain one major point that supports your topic sentence. Be sure to provide adequate information to both explain the point and connect the point to your topic.	While in high school, the school and the teachers monitor and enforce a student's attendance, yet in college, a student's attendance is not monitored and they can decide whether or not to attend class. As a result, many students may choose to go to the beach or to the mall rather than school.
Introduce and explain the second major point that supports your topic sentence. Be sure to provide adequate information to both explain the point and connect the point to your topic.	Though a college student's grades may suffer from missing a scheduled class meeting, high school students are given detention or other forms of punishment. To many college students, this lack of consequences seems freeing, yet it actually reflects a lack of support. Without the college or professors supporting a student's attendance, the student must make these decisions on their own.
Introduce and explain the third major point that supports your topic sentence. Be sure to provide adequate information to both explain the point and connect the point to your topic.	This situation can also be exacerbated by a lack of nearby family and friends. A large number of college students move away from home to attend college, whereas most high school students still live with their parents. Due to this, college students may not have the same support system as high school students.
A body paragraph can contain as many points as needed to explain and support the topic sentence.	What is more, some college students may be the only individual from their high school to attend a university. Thus, in addition to leaving their family, a student may find themselves friendless.
Concluding/transition sentence	Despite the hazardous effects that this lack of support may produce, there are also several other factors that affect a college student's ability to succeed.

Concluding sentences

- Begin by reflecting the argument of the thesis statement.
- Briefly summarize the main points of the paragraph.
- Provide a strong and effective close for the paragraph.

Table 3: Dos and don'ts of conclusions

Things to always do	Things to never do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress the importance of the thesis. • Include a brief summary of the main idea. • Be concise. • Provide a sense of closure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rework your introduction or thesis statement. • Use overused phrases. (Example: <i>In summary ...</i> or <i>In conclusion ...</i>) • Announce what you have written in the body of the paragraph. (Example: <i>In this paragraph, I have emphasized the importance of ...</i>) • Apologize. (Example: <i>Although I do not have all the answers ...</i>) • Make absolute claims. (Example: <i>This proves that the government should ...</i>)

You may feel that the concluding sentence is redundant or unnecessary. However, do not forget that this is your last chance to explain the significance of your argument to your audience. Just as your body sentences strive to present the significance of each fact or quote you use, your concluding sentence should sum up the significance of your argument. Thus, you should consider making a bold statement in your concluding sentence by evoking a vivid image, suggesting results or consequences related to your argument, or ending with a warning. Through using these strategies, you not only make your concluding sentence more exciting, but you also make your paragraph and your argument more important.

Writing Ideas

- a. Write an expository paragraph about your favourite movie or book, paying special attention to why a certain book or movie is your favourite. Be sure to briefly but adequately summarize the movie or book in order to provide a concise and comprehensible explanation. Additionally, be sure to use concrete details and examples to explain why you enjoy the book or movie you are writing about. Simply summarizing the plot will not explain to the reader why the book or movie is entertaining to you.
- b. Write an expository paragraph about a historical event, indicating at least three factors that contributed to its development. For instance, you could discuss how factors such as residential schools led to the reconciliation movement. A factor could be an event, an individual, or a movement that is historically significant. In order to properly show how certain factors caused or contributed to a specific event, you must clarify both the factors and the event itself.

Attribution & References

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PERSUASIVE PARAGRAPHS

The main aim of a persuasive paragraph is to make an effective argument. Thus, persuasive paragraphs are written as if the writer is attempting to convince their audience to adopt a new belief or behaviour. While expository paragraphs strive to explain or clarify a topic, persuasive paragraphs take a stand on an issue. However, simply having an argument or viewpoint about a topic is not enough. In persuasive paragraphs, writers must also support their claims. Typically, persuasive paragraphs support their arguments through the use of appropriate evidence, such as quotations, examples, expert opinions, or other facts. Nevertheless, simply having a viewpoint and supporting evidence is still not enough to write a strong persuasive paragraph. In addition to these two things, a writer must also have strong organization.

Organization is the key to any well-developed paragraph. When composing your paragraph, think of its organization as a set of blocks balanced between two triangles (see Figure 1). Each block represents the main arguments of your paragraph, while the two triangles stand for your introductory and concluding sentences, respectively. Just as the top triangle comes to a point before leading into the blocks, your introductory sentence should make your thesis before your paragraph jumps to the supporting sentences. These supporting sentences, as the blocks suggest, should be full of information and logically solid. Just as the stability and balance of the shapes rests on the solidity of the blocks, the stability of the paragraph's argument rests on the success of the body sentences. Much like the introductory sentence that precedes it, your concluding sentence should restate your thesis statement and the main argument of your paragraph, allowing your paragraph to end on a firm base.

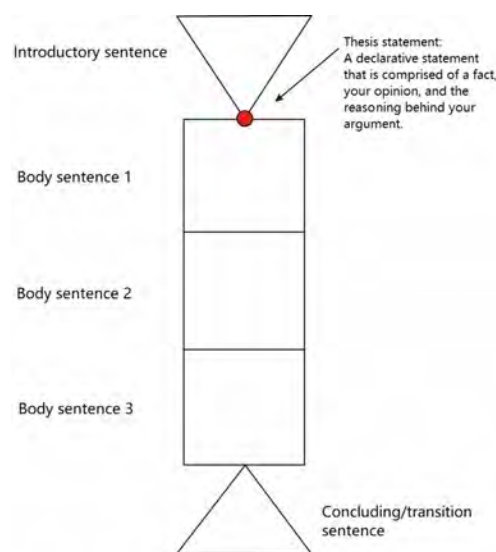


Figure 1: A representation of the organization of a persuasive paragraph.

The sections below identify the major components of each part of a persuasive paragraph. Keep in mind that these guidelines are not meant to hinder your voice as a writer, but rather to strengthen your effectiveness as a writer. Though you may sometimes feel constricted by this organizational framework, it is essential to compose a paragraph that contains all of these parts in order to make a strong argument. Plus, once you get acquainted with how to organize a persuasive paragraph, you will be able to use your creative juices in the actual writing of the paragraph. Rather than focusing on where to put an idea, you can focus on how to express or explain, which makes your job as a writer easier and more exciting.

Introductory Sentences

A strong introductory sentence is crucial to the development of an effective persuasive paragraph. Without an introductory sentence that properly introduces both the topic *and* the writer's argument, persuasive paragraphs fail to convince the reader of the validity of the argument. Since the introductory sentence contains the thesis statement, or the core argument and purpose of the paragraph, introductory sentences are essential to the overall success of the paragraph.

Introductory sentences

- Introduce the issue.
- Preview the argument that will appear in the body.
- Provide each of the arguments that will later appear in each body sentence.
- Refute any counterpoints to the argument.
- Provide the thesis statement.

Since the success of the paragraph rests on the introductory sentence, it is important to understand its essential components. Usually, when persuasive paragraphs fail to make a clear argument, it is not because the writer's ideas or opinions are wrong, but rather because the argument is not properly explained in the introduction. One of the most important jobs of an introductory sentence is to introduce the topic or issue. Most arguments cannot be made without at least some background information. Thus, it is essential to provide a foundation for your topic before you begin explaining your argument. For instance, if you wanted to argue that the animation in the movie *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* is innovative, your introductory sentence would first need to provide background information about movie animation. By doing so, you ensure that your audience is as informed about your topic as you are, and thus, you make it easier for your audience to understand your argument.

Below, the main jobs of the introductory sentence are described and explained in detail.

The purposes of introductory sentences

Introductory sentences introduce the topic and suggest why it is important.

Example: An analysis of the Vancouver Island University Writing Centre survey answers reveals that a significant portion of tutees improved their writing skills, and this has correlated to an improvement on their essay scores.

This sentence tells the reader both that the topic of the paragraph will be the benefits of the Writing Centre and that the significance of these benefits is the improvement of essay scores.

Introductory sentences outline the structure of the paragraph and highlight the main ideas.

Example: Considering the dropout rate of high-schoolers in Canada, it is apparent that schools are not addressing the social conditions that lead students to fail.

This sentence provides the main ideas of the paragraph and indicates the order in which they will be presented in the body sentences.

Introductory sentences state the thesis.

Example: Kwantlen Polytechnic University should require all students to enrol in Creative Writing courses in order to better prepare them for employment.

This thesis statement indicates the argument of the paragraph.

In addition to introducing the topic of your paragraph, your introductory sentence also needs to introduce each of the arguments you will cover in your body sentences. By providing your audience with an idea of the points or arguments you will make later in your paragraph, your introductory sentence serves as a roadmap not only for your audience but also for you. Including your main subpoints in your introduction not only allows your audience to understand where your paragraph is headed, but also helps you as a writer remember how you want to organize your paragraph. This is especially helpful if you are not writing your paragraph in one sitting, as it allows you to leave and return to your paragraph without forgetting all of the important points you wanted to make.

Another common—though often forgotten—component of an introductory sentence is the refutation of counterarguments. In order for your argument to appear strong, and in order for your audience to know that you considered the arguments against your claim, it is essential to refute or disprove counterarguments (arguments against your thesis) in your introductory sentence. The most common error writers make when dealing with counterarguments is to not refute them. Sometimes, a writer forgets to show how the counterarguments are wrong and how their argument is correct. To avoid this error, consider using the sentence constructions in the list below that help refute counterarguments. By using words such as “while,”

“although,” “yet,” or “however” in compound sentences, you can be sure that you are properly refuting any counterarguments to your argument while supporting your own claims.

In the examples listed below, *X* is the counterargument and *Y* is the writer’s argument:

- While most people believe *X*, *Y* is true.
- Although people argue *X*, *Y* is correct.
- This expert claims *X*, yet this expert in the same field argues *Y*.
- This book says *X*; however, this book indicates that *Y* is true.

There are also some important dos and don’ts when it comes to writing introductory sentences. It is crucial when writing your persuasive paragraph to avoid apologizing or using sweeping generalizations, since both undermine your argument. If you continue to apologize in your paragraph, you make your argument seem weak, and thus your audience is unconvinced. Likewise, if you base your argument on a generalization or stereotype—something which your audience will likely disagree with—your entire argument will lose credit or validity. Also, it is important not to rely too heavily on dictionary definitions, especially in your thesis. A thesis must be composed of a fact and a viewpoint. Thus, if you base your argument on a definition, which is an irrefutable fact, your thesis is no longer a point of view but a truth.

Table 1: Dos and don’ts of introductions

Things to always do	Things to never do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture the interest of your reader. • Introduce the issue to the reader. • State the problem simply. • Write in an intelligible, concise manner. • Refute any counterpoints. • State the thesis, preferably in one arguable statement. • Provide each of the arguments that will be presented in each of the body sentences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologize: Do not suggest that you are unfamiliar with the topic. (Example: <i>I cannot be certain, but ...</i>) • Use sweeping generalizations. (Example: <i>All men like football ...</i>) • Use a dictionary definition. (Example: <i>According to the dictionary, a humble person is ...</i>) • Announce your intentions: Do not directly state what you will be writing about. (Example: <i>In this paper, I will ...</i>)

Most importantly, when writing an introductory sentence, it is essential to remember that you must capture the interest of your reader. Thus, it is your job as the writer to make the introduction entertaining or intriguing. In order to do so, consider using a hook, or a quotation, a surprising or interesting fact, an anecdote, or a humorous story. While the quotation, story, or fact you include must be relevant to your paragraph, placing one of these at the beginning of your introduction helps you not only capture the attention of the reader, but also introduce your topic and argument, making your introduction interesting to your audience and useful for your argument and paragraph. However, after using a hook, you must transition from the quote, fact, or story that is used into the main topic of your paragraph. Often, writers include

interesting hooks that they do not connect to their topic or argument. In these instances, the hook detracts from rather than supports the introductory sentence.

Body Sentences

In a persuasive paragraph, the body sentences are where the writer has the opportunity to argue their viewpoint. By the concluding sentence, the writer should convince the reader to agree with the argument of the paragraph. Regardless of a strong thesis, paragraphs with weak body sentences fail to explain why the argument of the paragraph is both true and important. Body sentences of a persuasive paragraph are weak when no quotes or facts are used to support the thesis or when those used are not adequately explained. Occasionally, body sentences are also weak because the quotes used detract from rather than support the paragraph. Thus, it is essential to use appropriate support and to adequately explain your support within your body sentences.

In order to create a body sentence that is properly supported and explained, it is important to understand the components that make up a strong body sentence. The bullet points below indicate the essential components of a well-written, well-argued body sentence.

Body sentences

- Begin by reflecting the argument of the thesis statement.
- Support the argument with useful and informative quotes from sources such as books, journal articles, expert opinions, etc.
- Explain each quote and indicate its significance.
- Ensure that the information provided is relevant to the thesis statement.
- End with a transition which leads into the next body sentence.

Just as your introduction must introduce the topic of your paragraph, the first body sentence must introduce the argument. For instance, if you were writing a body sentence for a paragraph arguing the animation in the movie *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* is innovative, one body sentence may begin, “*Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* has produced the most surprising animation of any movie so far this decade.” Following this sentence, you would go on to support this one statement by indicating how the movie does this. When you place this statement as the opening of your sentence, not only does your audience know what you are going to argue, but you can also keep track of your ideas.

Your sentences must provide some sort of fact that supports your claim. In the example of the *Spider-Verse*

paragraph, maybe you would provide a quote from a movie critic or a prominent animator. After your quote or fact, you must always explain what the quote or fact is saying, stressing what you believe is most important about your fact. It is important to remember that your audience may read a quote and decide it is arguing something entirely different than what you think it is arguing. Or, maybe some of your readers think another aspect of your quote is important. If you do not explain the quote and indicate what portion of it is relevant to your argument, then your reader may become confused or may be unconvinced of your point. Consider the possible interpretations for the statement below.

Example: While I did not like the storyline of the movie, I enjoyed the surprising animation in the film. Without the surprising animation, the storyline would have been boring and the characters would have been unoriginal.

Interestingly, this statement seems to be saying two things at once: that the movie is bad and that the movie is good. On the one hand, the person seems to say that the storyline and characters of the movie were both bad. On the other hand, the person also says that the animation more than makes up for the bad storyline and unoriginal characters. Because of this tension in the quotation, if you used this quote in your *Spider-Verse* paragraph, you would need to explain that the animation in the movie is so good that it makes a boring movie exciting.

In addition to explaining what this quote is saying, you would also need to indicate why this is important to your argument. When trying to indicate the significance of a fact, it is essential to try to answer the “so what.” Imagine you have just finished explaining your quote to someone, and they have asked you “so what?” The person does not understand why you have explained this quote, not because you have not explained the quote well, but because you have not told them why they need to know what the quote means. This—the answer to the “so what”—is the significance of your paragraph and is essentially your argument within the body sentences. However, it is important to remember that, generally, a body sentence will contain more than one quotation or piece of support. Thus, you must repeat the quotation-explanation-significance formula several times within your body sentences to argue the one subpoint indicated in your topic sentence.

Concluding Sentences

The concluding sentence of a persuasive paragraph is an author’s last chance to create a good impression. Hence, it is important to restate the thesis statement at the beginning of the sentence in order to remind the reader of your argument. Since it is at the end of the paragraph, the concluding sentence should also add a sense of closure and finality to the argument of the paragraph. It is important to re-emphasize the main idea without being repetitive or introducing an entirely new idea or subtopic. While you can end your concluding sentence by suggesting a topic for further research or investigation, do not make this question the focus of the sentence. Thus, you should briefly and concisely reiterate the strongest arguments of the paragraph, reminding the reader of the validity of the thesis and bringing closure to your paragraph.

Concluding sentences

- Begin by reflecting the argument of the thesis statement.
- Briefly summarize the main points of the paragraph.
- Provide a strong and effective close for the paragraph.

The following is an example of a persuasive paragraph that argues for the importance of paragraph organization. The paragraph has been broken up to describe the purpose of each sentence (or group of sentences).

Table 2: An example persuasive paragraph

Purpose	Example
Topic sentence	The strength of a body paragraph lies in its organization.
Quote/Support #1	According to <i>The Bedford Handbook</i> , “the body of the essay develops support for [the] thesis, so it’s important to have at least a tentative thesis before [one starts] writing” (Hacker 38).
Explanation (1 to 2 sentences)	As this quote suggests, it is hard for a writer to support his or her thesis in a body paragraph before the thesis has even been developed. Thus, it is crucial to decide upon a thesis before starting to compose the body, or support, of an essay.
Significance (1 to 3 sentences)	Writing an essay in this order will ensure that the body paragraph argues the point which the writer is trying to make.
Quote/Support #2	What’s more, it is always important to “sketch a preliminary outline” and “draft the body of [the] essay by writing a paragraph about each supporting point listed in the planning stage” (Hacker 38).
Explanation (1 to 2 sentences)	In creating both an outline and a draft, the writer will begin creating his or her body paragraphs before the final draft is even begun.
Significance (1 to 3 sentences)	Moreover, this process will ensure that the writer never forgets any of his or her key points since they have already been written down. Hence, the writer can leave and revisit his or her work without fear of forgetting or losing any of the key arguments of the paper.
Concluding/Transition sentence	Although organization is essential to the effectiveness of a body paragraph, there are other factors which contribute to its overall strength.

Table 3: Dos and don'ts of conclusions

Things to always do	Things to never do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress the importance of the thesis. • Include a brief summary of the main idea. • Be concise. • Provide a sense of closure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rework your introduction or thesis statement. • Use overused phrases. (Example: <i>In summary ...</i> or <i>In conclusion ...</i>) • Announce what you have written in the body of the paragraph. (Example: <i>In this paragraph, I have emphasized the importance of ...</i>) • Apologize. (Example: <i>Although I do not have all the answers ...</i>) • Make absolute claims. (Example: <i>This proves that the government should ...</i>)

You may feel that the concluding sentence is redundant or unnecessary; however, do not forget that this is your last chance to explain the significance of your argument to your audience. Just as your body sentences strive to present the significance of each fact or quote you use, your concluding sentence should sum up the significance of your argument. Thus, you should consider making a bold statement in your concluding sentence by evoking a vivid image, suggesting results or consequences related to your argument, or ending with a warning. Through using these strategies, you not only make your concluding sentence more exciting, but you also make your paragraph, and your argument, more important.

Writing Ideas

- Write a persuasive paragraph arguing for or against a community service requirement that high school students must fulfill in order to graduate. If you are arguing for the requirement, be sure to specify what the requirement entails (i.e., how many hours or where it needs to be completed) in addition to supporting the use of the requirement. If you are arguing against the requirement, be sure to address counterpoints in addition to supporting your claims fully.
- Write a persuasive paragraph about the impact of one type of media—such as social media, video games, television, movies, or magazines—on high school aged (15–18) and junior high school aged (12–14) children. Should parents regulate both age groups' access to these forms of media? Or should only one group be monitored? If so, which? Do social media, video games, television, magazines, etc., affect one group more than the other? Use specific examples to support your ideas.

Attribution & References

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ESSAYS

Introduction

In this module, you will learn how to arrange your ideas and paragraphs into an essay. An essay is usually a written, non-fiction composition that discusses a central topic, and there are many types and sizes of essays. While some essays are quite short, like the five-paragraph essay (300–500 words), some, like university research essays, can be long (1500–2500 words or more). Just like the paragraphs, essays can have different purposes; some may try to persuade the reader to a certain point of view while others may narrate, compare, etc. Essentially, an essay is a format and structure for writing in an organized manner with a certain predictability.

Learning Objectives

- Discover the overall structure and components of an essay.
- Identify different types of essays (expository, persuasive, and narrative).
- Write a strong and clear thesis statement.
- Write body, introductory, and concluding paragraphs.
- Create a detailed essay outline.
- Write a five-paragraph essay using the seven (7) steps of the writing process.

To Do List

- Read “Expository Essays” in *Writing for Success – 1st Canadian HSP Edition*
- Explore three types of common writing types: expository, persuasive, and narrative.
- Read and take notes about “Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement” in *Communications Essentials for College*.
- Complete the Thesis Statement Assignment in Blackboard.
- Read “Writing Body Paragraphs” in *Communications Essentials for College*.
- Complete the Body Paragraph Assignment in Blackboard.
- Read “Creating an Outline for an Essay” in *Communications Essentials for College*.
- Create an outline using the template in Blackboard.
- Complete the Short Essay Assignment (without research) in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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EXPOSITORY ESSAYS

An Expository essay explains a writer's ideas by defining, explaining, informing, or elaborating on points to allow the reader to clearly understand the concept.

Many of your future academic workplace writing assignments will be expository—i.e., explaining your ideas or the significance of a concept or action. An expository essay allows the writer the opportunity to explain his or her ideas about a topic and to provide clarity for the reader by using:

- Facts
- Explanations
- Details
- Definitions

It may also include the writer outlining steps of a procedure in a way that is straightforward for the reader to follow. It is purely informative and often contains elements of summary.

Imagine you need to verbally explain a concept to your classmates, maybe a behavioural theory. What are the key elements on which you would focus? How would you organize the information? You could explain who came up with the theory, the specific area of study to which it is related, its purpose, and the significant details to explain the theory. Telling these four elements to your classmates would give them a complete, yet summarized, picture of the theory, so they could apply the theory in future discussions.

Although you did this verbally, you were still fulfilling the elements of an expository essay by providing definition, details, explanations, and maybe even facts if you have a really good memory. This is the same process that you would use when you write an expository essay. You may actually be doing this all the time; for example, when you are giving someone directions to a place or explaining how to cook something. In the following sections of the chapter, you will practise doing this more in different expository written forms.

The Structure of an Expository Essay

Sections versus Paragraphs

Before looking at the general structure of an expository essay, you first need to know that in your post-secondary education, you should not consider your essay as writing being constructed with five paragraphs as you might have been used to in high school. You should instead think of your essay in terms of sections (there may be five), and each section may have multiple paragraphs.

To understand further why you need to think beyond the five-paragraph essay, imagine you have been asked to submit a six-page paper (approximately 1,500 words). You already know that each paragraph should be roughly 75 to 200 words long. If you divide the required word count by five paragraphs (1,500 by 5), you end with 300 words per paragraph, way above the number you should have in a paragraph. If your paragraphs are too long, they likely have too many ideas and your reader may become confused. Your paragraphs should be two-third of a page at most, and *never* longer than a page.

Instead, if you think of your essays being divided into sections (with possibly more than one paragraph per section), your writing will likely be more organized and allow your reader to follow your presentation of ideas without creating too much distance between your paragraph's supporting points and its topic sentence.

Some essay forms may require even more than five paragraphs or sections because of how many points are necessary to address. For the rest of this chapter, the term *paragraph* will also imply section.

Sections of an Expository Essay

An expository essay, regardless of its purpose, should have at least five sections, which are:

- Introduction
- First body section/paragraph
- Second body section/paragraph
- Third body section/paragraph
- Conclusion

The **introduction** should state the topic of your paper: your thesis statement as well as brief signposts of what information the rest of the paper will include. That is, you only want to mention the content of the body paragraphs; you do not want to go into a lot of detail and repeat what will be in the rest of the essay.

The **first body section** or **paragraph** should focus on one of your main points and provide evidence to support that point. There should be two to three supporting points: reasons, facts, statistics, quotations, examples, or a mix of these. Both the **second** and **third body sections** should follow the same pattern. Providing three body sections with one point each that supports the thesis should provide the reader with enough detail to be convinced of your argument or fully understand the concept you are explaining. However, remember that some sections will require more explanation, and you may need to separate this information into multiple paragraphs.

You can order your sections in the most logical way to explain your ideas. For example, if you are describing a process, you may use chronological order to show the definite time order in which the steps need to happen. You will learn about the different ways to organize your body paragraphs in the next chapter.

The **concluding paragraph**, or conclusion, can be a little tricky to compose because you need to make sure you give a concise summary of the body paragraphs, but you must be careful not to simply repeat what

you have already written. Look back at the main idea of each section/paragraph and try to summarize the point using words different from those you have already used. Do not include any new points in your concluding paragraph.

Consider Your Audience: How Much Do They Know?

Later in this chapter, you will work on determining and adapting to your audience when writing, but with an expository essay, since you are defining or informing your audience on a certain topic, you need to evaluate how much your audience knows about that topic (aside from having general common knowledge). You want to make sure you are giving thorough, comprehensive, and clear explanations on the topic. Never assume the reader knows everything about your topic (even if it is covered in the reader's field of study). For example, even though some of your instructors may teach criminology, they may have specialized in different areas from the one about which you are writing; they most likely have a strong understanding of the concepts but may not recall all the small details on the topic. If your instructor specialized in crime mapping and data analysis for example, he or she may not have a strong recollection of specific criminological theories related to other areas of study. Providing enough background information without being too detailed is a fine balance, but you always want to ensure you have no gaps in the information, so your reader will not have to guess your intention.

Check Your Understanding: Expository Essays

Let's take a moment to see how much you already know about types of expository essays. Match the type of expository essay to the most correct description.

Expository Essays (Text Version)

Descriptions:

1. _____ the art of storytelling
2. _____ to show or demonstrate something clearly
3. _____ writing that appeals to our senses
4. _____ to break down broad subjects into smaller parts
5. _____ to explain how to do something or how something works
6. _____ establish the way in which people communicate ideas

7. _____ analyze two subjects in relation to each other
8. _____ to determine how various phenomena relate

Expository Essay Type:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| A. Process analysis | D. Description | G. Narrative |
| B. Illustration | E. Cause and effect | H. Classification |
| C. Compare and contrast | F. Definition | |

Check your answers¹

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Rhetorical modes refers simply to the ways to communicate effectively through language. As you read about these modes, keep in mind that the rhetorical mode a writer chooses depends on his or her purpose for writing. Sometimes writers incorporate a variety of modes in any one essay. In this chapter, we also emphasize the rhetorical modes as a set of tools that will allow you greater flexibility and effectiveness in communicating with your audience and expressing your ideas.

When asked to write an expository essay, think about which types of expository essays are easier and which are more challenging for you. You may want to explore a mode you find more challenging than the others in order to ensure you have a full grasp on developing each type. However, it is up to you. As you work through the sections, think about possible topics you could write an expository essay about, and visualize possible brainstorm ideas as you work through the self-practice exercises.

Watch It: Expository Writing

[Watch Expository writing: Writing to explain \(3 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from “[4.1 Expository Essays](#)” In *Writing for Success – 1st Canadian HSP Edition* by Tara Horkoff, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Adaptations include removing the last paragraph and adding the Expository Writing Video.

Notes

- | | | | |
|----|------|------|------|
| 1. | 1. G | 4. H | 7. C |
| | 2. B | 5. A | 8. E |
| | 3. D | 6. F | |

THE STRUCTURE OF A PERSUASIVE ESSAY

Writing a Persuasive Essay

You first need to choose a topic that you feel passionate about. If your instructor requires you to write about a specific topic, approach the subject from an angle that interests you. Begin your essay with an engaging introduction. Your thesis should typically appear somewhere in your introduction.

Next, you must acknowledge and explain points of view that may conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience. You should also state the limits of your argument. This helps you sound more reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone for the essay.

Be sure to make your appeals in support of your thesis by using sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be fully explained and clearly stated. Also, write in a style and tone that is appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors, while still being true to your own voice. Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis.

Structuring a Persuasive Essay

You may already be familiar with the formula below for organizing a persuasive essay. It will present a convincing argument to your reader because your discussion is well rounded and thorough, and you leave your audience with your point of view at the end. Remember to consider each of these components in this formula *sections* instead of *paragraphs* because you will probably want to discuss multiple ideas backing up your point of view to make it more convincing.

When writing a persuasive essay, it is best to begin with the most important point because it immediately captivates your readers and compels them to continue reading. For example, if you were supporting your thesis that homework is detrimental to the education of high school students, you would want to present your most convincing argument first, and then move on to the less important points for your case.

Some key transitional words you should use with this method of organization are: *most importantly*, *almost as importantly*, *just as importantly*, and *finally*.

The Formula

You will need to come up with objection points, but you will also need to think of direct rebuttals to each of those ideas. Remember to consult your outline as you are writing because you may need to double-check that you have countered *each* of the possible opposing ideas you presented.

Section 1: Introduction

- Attention-getter
- Thesis (showing main and controlling ideas)
- Background
- Signposts (make sure you outline the structure your argument will follow)

Section 2: (Multiple) Ideas in Support of Claim

- Give a topic sentence introducing the point (showing main and controlling ideas)
- Give explanations and evidence on the first point
- Make a concluding statement summarizing the point discussion (possibly transitioning to the next supporting idea)
- Repeat with multiple ideas in separate paragraphs

Section 3: Summary of (Some) Opposing Views

- Give a topic sentence explaining that this paragraph will present opposing points of view as part of providing a thorough, convincing argument
- Present a general summary of some opposing ideas
- Present some *generalized* evidence
- Provide a brief concluding sentence for the paragraph—transitioning into the next rebuttal paragraph

Section 4: Response to Opposing Views

- Give a topic sentence explaining/indicating how this paragraph/section **connects to or expands on the previous paragraph**
- [Here, you *may* recognize the validity of some of the points; then you need to] Present how your ideas are stronger
- Present evidence **directly countering/refuting** ideas mentioned in the previous section

- Give a concluding statement summarizing the **countering** arguments

Section 5: Conclusion

- Restate your thesis
- Summarize your discussion points
- Leave the reader with a strong impression; do not waiver here
- May provide a “call for action”

Tip

In a persuasive essay, the writer’s point of view should be clearly expressed at the beginning of each paragraph in the topic sentence, which should contain the main idea of the paragraph and the writer’s controlling idea.

Watch It: How to Write an Argumentative Essay with Example

[Watch How to write an argumentative essay with example \(3 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Video source: Literacy In Focus. (2023, February 1). *How to write an argumentative essay with example* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/VZKUeEBryOk>

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NARRATION

The Purpose of Narrative Writing

Narration refers to the art of storytelling, and the purpose of narrative writing is to tell stories. Anytime you tell a story to a friend or family member about an event or incident in your day, you engage in a form of narration.

A narrative can be factual or fictional. A **factual story** is one that is based on, and tries to be faithful to, actual events as they unfolded. A **fictional story** is made up or imagined; the writer of a fictional story can create characters and events as they see fit. Biographies and memoirs are examples of factual stories; novels and short stories are examples of fictional stories.

Tip

Because the line between fact and fiction can often blur, it is helpful to understand what your purpose is from the beginning. Is it important that you recount history, either your own or someone else's? Or does your interest lie in reshaping the world in your own image—either how you would like to see it or how you imagine it could be? Your answers will go a long way in shaping the stories you tell.

Ultimately, whether the story is fact or fiction, narrative writing tries to relay a series of events in an emotionally engaging way. You want your audience to be moved by your story, which could mean through humour, sympathy, fear, anger, and so on. The more clearly you tell your story, the more emotionally engaged your audience is likely to be.

Check your Understanding: Narrative Writing Practice

Narrative Writing Practice (Text version)
Exercise Preamble

For this exercise, you will be writing a rough plot summary of a narrative-style expository essay. We will use the freewriting strategy, where you set a timer (this time for five minutes) and write as freely as you can, trying not to worry too much about what is on the page but instead just working to get your ideas on paper. Don't censor yourself—you can always edit later.

Choose one of these topics, or select something else you find more interesting:

- Childhood
- School
- Adventure
- Work
- Love
- Family
- Friends
- Vacation
- Nature
- Space

Before you start, you'll need to decide if your narrative will be factual (true story) or fictional (made up). Either is fine!

Set your timer for **five minutes** and write without distraction until it goes off. (If you would prefer not to type, you can of course do your freewriting on paper.)

Organize Freewrite

1. Look back at your freewriting and think about whether your narrative makes sense **chronologically**. Revise your freewriting into a rough draft that uses transitions in order to show the relationship between the events and express time.
Share your rough draft here.
2. Remember to use transitions! In fact, let's make note of the transitions you used above, and what they did for your draft (how did they help you explain the chronology of your narrative?).

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The Structure of a Narrative Essay

Major narrative events are most often conveyed in **chronological order**, the order in which events unfold from first to last. Stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and these events are typically organized by time. Using transitional words and phrases help to keep the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed below.

Transitional Words and Phrases for Expressing Time

- after/afterward
- as soon as
- at last
- before
- currently
- during
- eventually
- meanwhile
- next
- now
- since
- soon
- finally
- later
- still
- then
- until
- when/whenever
- while
- first, second, third

The following are the basic components of a narrative:

- **Plot**—The events as they unfold in sequence.
- **Character**—The people who inhabit the story and move it forward. Typically, there are minor characters and main characters. The minor characters generally play supporting roles to the main character, or the protagonist.
- **Conflict**—The primary problem or obstacle that unfolds in the plot that the protagonist must solve or overcome by the end of the narrative. The way in which the protagonist resolves the conflict of the plot results in the theme of the narrative.
- **Theme**—The ultimate message the narrative is trying to express; it can be either explicit or implicit.

Writing at Work

When interviewing candidates for jobs, employers often ask about conflicts or problems a potential employee has had to overcome. They are asking for a compelling personal narrative. To prepare for this question in a job interview, write out a scenario using the narrative mode. This will allow you to troubleshoot rough spots as well as better understand your own personal history. It will make both your story and your presentation of it better.

Writing a Narrative Essay

When writing a narrative essay, start by asking yourself if you want to write a factual or fictional story. Then freewrite about topics that are of general interest to you.

Once you have a general idea of what you will be writing about, sketch out the major events of the story that will compose your plot. Typically, these events will be revealed chronologically and climax at a central conflict that must be resolved by the end of the story. The use of strong details is crucial as you describe the events and characters in your narrative. You want the reader to emotionally engage with the world that you create in writing.

Tip

To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative.

As always, it is important to start with a strong introduction to hook your reader into wanting to read more. Try opening the essay with an interesting event that helps to get the story going. Finally, your conclusion should help resolve the central conflict of the story and impress upon your reader the ultimate theme of the piece.

Watch It: How to Write a Narrative Essay

[Watch How to write a narrative essay \(2:30 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from “[4.2 Narration](#)” In *Fraser Valley India’s Writing for Success for LMS* by Tara Horkoff, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Adaptations include adding the How to Write a Narrative Essay video and removal of one sentence with Appendix reference.

DEVELOPING A STRONG, CLEAR THESIS STATEMENT

Have you ever known a person who was not very good at telling stories? You probably had trouble following their train of thought as they jumped around from point to point, either being too brief in places that needed further explanation or providing too many details on a meaningless element. Maybe they told the end of the story first, then moved to the beginning and later added details to the middle. Their ideas were probably scattered, and the story did not flow very well. When the story was over, you probably had many questions.

Just as a personal anecdote can be a disorganized mess, an essay can fall into the same trap of being out of order and confusing. That is why writers need a thesis statement to provide a specific focus for their essay and to organize what they are about to discuss in the body.

Just like a topic sentence summarizes a single paragraph, the thesis statement summarizes an entire essay. It tells the reader the point you want to make in your essay, while the essay itself supports that point. It is like a signpost that signals the essay's destination. You should form your thesis before you begin to organize an essay, but you may find that it needs revision as the essay develops.

Elements of a Thesis Statement

For every essay you write, you must focus on a central idea. This idea stems from a topic you have chosen or been assigned or from a question your teacher has asked. It is not enough merely to discuss a general topic or simply answer a question with a yes or no. You have to form a specific opinion, and then articulate that into a controlling idea—the main idea upon which you build your thesis.

Remember that a thesis is not the topic itself, but rather your interpretation of the question or subject. For whatever topic your professor gives you, you must ask yourself, “What do I want to say about it?” Asking and then answering this question is vital to forming a thesis that is precise, forceful and confident.

A thesis is one sentence long and appears toward the end of your introduction. It is specific and focuses on one to three points of a single idea—points that are able to be demonstrated in the body. It forecasts the content of the essay and suggests how you will organize your information. Remember that a thesis statement does not summarize an issue but rather dissects it.

Watch It: How to Write a Thesis Statement

[Watch How to write an essay: Thesis statements \(5 mins\) on YouTube](#)

A Strong Thesis Statement

A strong thesis statement contains the following qualities.

Specificity—A thesis statement must concentrate on a specific area of a general topic. As you may recall, the creation of a thesis statement begins when you choose a broad subject and then narrow down its parts until you pinpoint a specific aspect of that topic. For example, health care is a broad topic, but a proper thesis statement would focus on a specific area of that topic, such as options for individuals without health care coverage.

Precision—A strong thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a coherent argument and to remain focused on the topic. If the specific topic is individuals without employment benefits, then your precise thesis statement must make an exact claim about it, such as that all employers should be obligated to provide certain benefits. You must further pinpoint what you are going to discuss regarding these required benefits, such as what types should be required.

Ability to be argued—A thesis statement must present a relevant and specific argument. A factual statement often is not considered arguable. Be sure your thesis statement contains a point of view that can be supported with evidence.

Ability to be demonstrated—For any claim you make in your thesis, you must be able to provide reasons and examples for your opinion. You can rely on personal observations in order to do this, or you can consult outside sources to demonstrate that what you assert is valid. A worthy argument is backed by examples and details.

Forcefulness—A thesis statement that is forceful shows readers that you are, in fact, making an argument. The tone is assertive and takes a stance that others might oppose.

Confidence—In addition to using force in your thesis statement, you must also use confidence in your claim. Phrases such as *I feel* or *I believe* actually weaken the readers' sense of your confidence because these phrases imply that you are the only person who feels the way you do. In other words, your stance has insufficient backing. Taking an authoritative stance on the matter persuades your readers to have faith in your argument and open their minds to what you have to say.

Tip

Even in a personal essay that allows the use of first person, your thesis should not contain phrases such as *in my opinion* or *I believe*. These statements reduce your credibility and weaken your argument. Your opinion is more convincing when you use a firm attitude.

Check Your Understanding: Writing a Thesis Statement

On a separate sheet of paper, write a thesis statement for each of the following topics. Remember to make each statement specific, precise, demonstrable, forceful and confident.

Topics

- Texting while driving
- The legal drinking age in Canada
- Steroid use among professional athletes
- Free speech
- Racism

Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

Each of the following thesis statements meets several of the following requirements:

- Specificity
- Precision
- Ability to be argued
- Ability to be demonstrated
- Forcefulness
- Confidence

1. Educating newcomers to Canada about historical Indigenous treaties is an important way to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action.
2. Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony in *Romeo and Juliet* spoils the outcome for the audience and weakens the plot.
3. J. D. Salinger's character in *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield, is a confused rebel who voices his disgust with phonies, yet in an effort to protect himself, he acts like a phony on many occasions.
4. Compared to an absolute divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes for marital breakdown.
5. Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
6. In today's crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough education to land a stable, lucrative job.

Now that you have read about the contents of a good thesis statement and have seen examples, take a look at the pitfalls to avoid when composing your own thesis:

- A thesis is weak when it is simply a declaration of your subject or a description of what you will discuss in your essay.
Weak thesis statement: My paper will explain why imagination is more important than knowledge.
- A thesis is weak when it makes an unreasonable or outrageous claim or insults the opposing side.
Weak thesis statement: Religious radicals across Canada are trying to legislate their Puritanical beliefs by banning required high school books.
- A thesis is weak when it contains an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with or provides a dead end.
Weak thesis statement: Advertising companies use sex to sell their products.
- A thesis is weak when the statement is too broad.
Weak thesis statement: The life of Sir John A. Macdonald was long and challenging.

Tip

You can find thesis statements in many places, such as in the news; in the opinions of friends, coworkers or teachers; and even in songs you hear on the radio. Become aware of thesis statements in everyday life by paying attention to people's opinions and their reasons for those opinions. Pay attention to your own everyday thesis statements as well, as these can become material for future essays.

Check Your Understanding: Strong Thesis Statements

Strong Thesis Statements (Text version)

Match the terms following terms (a-f) to the correct phrase (1-6).

- a. an ability to be demonstrated
- b. confidence
- c. precision
- d. specificity
- e. forcefulness
- f. the ability to be argued

Phrases:

1. Phrases like “I believe” or “I feel” actually weaken your argument. Instead, take a stance with _____ which encourages readers to support your position.
2. Stating a fact is not enough. A thesis statement must have _____.
3. A strong thesis statement must have _____, which means a general topic is narrowed down and made unambiguous.
4. Your tone should have _____ which shows readers you are making an argument that could be opposed.
5. Your argument must remained focused on the overall topic while making a specific point. This is known as _____.
6. Any claim that is made in your thesis must be able to be supported by reasons and examples. This is know as _____.

Check your answers:¹

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Check Your Understanding: Identifying Strong Thesis Statements

Identifying Strong Thesis Statements (Text version)

Read the following thesis statements and identify each as weak or strong.

1. The subject of this paper is my experience with ferrets as pets.
2. The government must expand its funding for research on renewable energy resources in order to prepare for the impending end of oil.
3. Edgar Allan Poe was a poet who lived in Baltimore during the 19th century.
4. In this essay, I will give you a lot of reasons why marijuana should not be legalized in British Columbia.
5. Because many children's toys have potential safety hazards that could lead to injury, it is clear that not all children's toys are safe.
6. My experience with young children has taught me that I want to be a disciplinary parent because I believe that a child without discipline can be a parent's worst nightmare.

Check your answers:²

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Writing at Work

Often in your career, you will need to ask your boss for something through an e-mail. Just as a thesis statement organizes an essay, it can also organize your e-mail request. While your e-mail will be shorter than an essay, using a thesis statement in your first paragraph quickly lets your boss know what you are asking for, why it is necessary, and what the benefits are. In short body paragraphs, you can provide the essential information needed to expand upon your request.

Thesis Statement Revision

Your thesis will probably change as you write, so you will need to modify it to reflect exactly what you have discussed in your essay. Your thesis statement begins as a working thesis statement, an indefinite statement that you make about your topic early in the writing process for the purpose of planning and guiding your writing.

Working thesis statements often become stronger as you gather information and form new opinions and reasons for those opinions. Revision helps you strengthen your thesis so that it matches what you have expressed in the body of the paper.

Tip

The best way to revise your thesis statement is to ask questions about it and then examine the answers to those questions. By challenging your own ideas and forming definite reasons for those ideas, you grow closer to a more precise point of view, which you can then incorporate into your thesis statement.

Ways to Revise Your Thesis

You can cut down on irrelevant aspects and revise your thesis by taking the following steps:

1. Pinpoint and replace all nonspecific words, such as *people*, *everything*, *society*, or *life*, with more precise words in order to reduce any vagueness.

Working thesis: Young people have to work hard to succeed in life.

Revised thesis: Recent college graduates must have discipline and persistence in order to find and maintain a stable job in which they can use and be appreciated for their talents.

The revised thesis makes a more specific statement about success and what it means to work hard. The original includes too broad a range of people and does not define exactly what success entails. By replacing those general words like *people* and *work hard*, the writer can better focus his or her research and gain more direction in his or her writing.

2. Clarify ideas that need explanation by asking yourself questions that narrow your thesis.

Working thesis: The welfare system is a joke.

Revised thesis: The welfare system keeps a socioeconomic class from gaining employment by alluring members of that class with unearned income, instead of programs to improve their education and skill sets.

A joke means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for

the selected audience. By asking questions, the writer can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for *joke*. The writer should ask himself or herself questions similar to the 5WH questions—*Who, What, Where, When, Why* and *How*. By incorporating the answers to these questions into a thesis statement, the writer more accurately defines their stance, which will better guide the writing of the essay.

3. Replace any linking verbs with action verbs. Linking verbs are forms of the verb *to be*, a verb that simply states that a situation exists.

Working thesis: Simcoe County school teachers are not paid enough.

Revised thesis: Simcoe County District School Board cannot afford to pay its educators enough, resulting in job cuts and resignations in a district that sorely needs highly qualified and dedicated teachers.

The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word *are*. Linking verbs often make thesis statements weak because they do not express action. Rather, they connect words and phrases to the second half of the sentence. Readers might wonder, “Why are they not paid enough?” But this statement does not compel them to ask many more questions. The writer should ask themselves questions in order to replace the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement, one that takes a more definitive stance on the issue:

- Who is not paying the teachers enough?
- What is considered “enough”?
- What is the problem?
- What are the results?

4. Omit any general claims that are hard to support.

Working thesis: Today’s teenage girls are too sexualized.

Revised thesis: Teenage girls who are captivated by the sexual images on MTV are conditioned to believe that a woman’s worth depends on her sensuality, a feeling that harms their self-esteem and behavior.

It is true that some young women in today’s society are more sexualized than in the past, but that is not true for all girls. The writer of this thesis should ask the following questions:

- Which teenage girls?
- What constitutes “too” sexualized?
- Why are they behaving that way?
- Where does this behavior show up?
- What are the repercussions?

Writing at Work

In your career you may have to write a project proposal that focuses on a particular problem in your company, such as reinforcing the tardiness policy. The proposal would aim to fix the problem; using a thesis statement would clearly state the boundaries of the problem and tell the goals of the project. After writing the proposal, you may find that the thesis needs revision to reflect exactly what is expressed in the body. Using the techniques from this chapter would apply to revising that thesis.

Attribution & References

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Notes

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | 1. b) confidence | 3. d) specificity | 5. c) precision |
| | 2. f) an ability to be argued | 4. e) forcefulness | 6. a) an ability to be demonstrated |
| 2. | 1. Weak | 3. Weak | 5. Strong |
| | 2. Strong | 4. Weak | 6. Weak. |

ORGANIZING YOUR WRITING

The method of organization you choose for your essay is just as important as its content. Without a clear organizational pattern, your reader could become confused and lose interest. The way you structure your essay helps your readers draw connections between the body and the thesis, and the structure also keeps you focused as you plan and write the essay. Choosing your organizational pattern before you outline ensures that each body paragraph works to support and develop your thesis.

This section covers three ways to organize body paragraphs:

1. Chronological order
2. Order of importance
3. Spatial order

When you begin to draft your essay, your ideas may seem to flow from your mind in a seemingly random manner. Your readers, who bring to the table different backgrounds, viewpoints, and ideas, need you to clearly organize these ideas in order to help process and accept them. A solid organizational pattern gives your ideas a path that you can follow as you develop your draft.

Chronological Order

Chronological arrangement has the following purposes:

- To explain the history of an event or a topic
- To tell a story or relate an experience
- To explain how to do or make something
- To explain the steps in a process

Chronological order is mostly used in expository writing, which is a form of writing that narrates, describes, informs, or explains a process. When using chronological order, arrange the events in the order that they actually happened—or will happen, if you are giving instructions. This method requires you to use words such as *first*, *second*, *then*, *after that*, *later*, and *finally*. These transition words guide you and your reader through the paper as you expand your thesis.

For example, if you are writing an essay about the history of the airline industry, you would begin with its

conception and detail the essential timeline events up until present day. You would follow the chain of events using words such as *first*, *then*, *next*, and so on.

Check Your Understanding: Using Chronological Order

Using Chronological Order (Text version)

Put the statements in the correct chronological order by numbering them in the order you believe they should be organized into a paragraph.

1. When I have the shot pulled, I use a milk steamer to steam one cup of milk.
2. Every morning I make my coffee in the same way for maximum flavour.
3. Next, I use an espresso machine to pull an espresso shot directly into my coffee cup.
4. And that's how I start my day with my perfect latte!
5. First, I freshly grind my espresso beans.
6. Finally, I slowly pour the steamed milk into my espresso.

Check your answers: ¹

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Keep in mind that chronological order is most appropriate for the following purposes:

- Writing essays containing heavy research
- Writing essays with the aim of listing, explaining, or narrating
- Writing essays that analyze literary works such as poems, plays, or books

Tip

When using chronological order, your introduction should indicate the information you will cover and in what order, and the introduction should also establish the relevance of the information. Your body paragraphs should then provide clear divisions or steps in chronology.

Order of Importance

Order of importance is best used for the following purposes:

- Persuading and convincing
- Ranking items by their importance, benefit, or significance
- Illustrating a situation, problem, or solution

Most essays move from the least to the most important point, and the paragraphs are arranged in an effort to build the essay's strength. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to begin with your most important supporting point, such as in an essay that contains a thesis that is highly debatable. When writing a persuasive essay, it is best to begin with the most important point because it immediately captivates your readers and compels them to continue reading.

For example, if you were supporting your thesis that homework is detrimental to the education of high school students, you would want to present your most convincing argument first, and then move on to the less important points for your case.

Some key transitional words you should use with this method of organization are *most importantly*, *almost as importantly*, *just as importantly*, and *finally*.

Writing at Work

During your career, you may be required to work on a team that devises a strategy for a specific goal of your company, such as increasing profits. When planning your strategy you should organize your steps in order of importance. This demonstrates the ability to prioritize and plan. Using the order of importance technique also shows that you can create a resolution with logical steps for accomplishing a common goal.

Check Your Understanding: Using Order of Importance

Using Order of Importance (Text version)

Put the statements in the correct order of importance by numbering them in the order you believe they should be organized into a paragraph.

- a. Most importantly, it prevents unexpected harm from coming to the dog or to the people and animals he encounters.
- b. Almost as important, though, is the bond that it helps create between the dog and his caretaker.
- c. And finally, dogs love the sense of achievement they feel when they master simple tasks.
- d. For all of these reasons, proper dog training is important and should not be overlooked.
- e. Adequate training is critical to the success of a relationship between a person and their dog.

Check your answers:²

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Spatial Order

Spatial order is best used for the following purposes:

- Helping readers visualize something as you want them to see it
- Evoking a scene using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)
- Writing a descriptive essay

Spatial order means that you explain or describe objects as they are arranged around you in your space, for example in a bedroom. As the writer, you create a picture for your reader, and their perspective is the viewpoint from which you describe what is around you.

The view must move in an orderly, logical progression, giving the reader clear directional signals to follow from place to place. The key to using this method is to choose a specific starting point and then guide the reader to follow your eye as it moves in an orderly trajectory from your starting point.

Pay attention to the following student’s description of her bedroom and how she guides the reader through the viewing process, foot by foot.

Attached to my bedroom wall is a small wooden rack dangling with red and turquoise necklaces that shimmer as you enter. Just to the right of the rack is my window, framed by billowy white curtains. The peace of such an image is a stark contrast to my desk, which sits to the right of the window, layered in textbooks, crumpled papers, coffee cups, and an overflowing ashtray. Turning my head to the right, I see a set of two bare windows that frame the trees outside the glass like a 3D painting. Below the windows is an oak chest from which blankets and scarves are protruding. Against the wall opposite the billowy curtains is an antique dresser, on top of which sits a jewelry box and a few picture frames. A tall mirror attached to the dresser takes up most of the wall, which is the color of lavender.

The paragraph incorporates two objectives you have learned in this chapter: using an implied topic sentence and applying spatial order. Often in a descriptive essay, the two work together.

The following are possible transition words or phrases to include when using spatial order:

- Just to the left or just to the right
- Behind
- Between
- On the left or on the right
- Across from
- A little further down
- To the south, to the east, and so on
- A few yards away
- Turning left or turning right

Check Your Understanding: Using Spatial Order

Using Spatial Order (Text Version)

Put the statements in the correct spatial order by numbering them in the order you believe they should be organized into a paragraph.

- a. The rest of the area within the gate is a meadow of clover and flowers.
- b. Reflecting on this space reminds me that it's nice to have somewhere to go that is so calm and soothing.
- c. The farmyard is a peaceful and familiar space.
- d. When you first enter the property through the farm gate, there is a red barn to the right.
- e. To the immediate left of the red barn is a pig pen and a chicken coup.
- f. Across the farmyard from the animals is the farmhouse, which has a duck pond in the backyard.

Check your answers: ³

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Notes

1. Correct order is 2., 5., 3., 1., 6., 4.
2. 1. e, 2. a, 3. b, 4. c, 5. d.
3. 1. c, 2. d, 3. e, 4. f, 5. a, 6. b

WRITING BODY PARAGRAPHS

If your thesis gives the reader a roadmap to your essay, then body paragraphs should closely follow that map. The reader should be able to predict what follows your introductory paragraph by simply reading the thesis statement.

The body paragraphs present the evidence you have gathered to confirm your thesis. Before you begin to support your thesis in the body, you must find information from a variety of sources that support and give credit to what you are trying to prove.

Select Primary Support for Your Thesis

Without primary support, your argument is not likely to be convincing. Primary support can be described as the **major points** you choose to expand on your thesis. It is the most important information you select to argue for your point of view. Each point you choose will be incorporated into the topic sentence for each body paragraph you write. Your primary supporting points are further supported by supporting details within the paragraphs.

Tip

Remember that a worthy argument is backed by examples. In order to construct a valid argument, good writers conduct lots of background research and take careful notes. They also talk to people knowledgeable about a topic in order to understand its implications before writing about it.

Identify the Characteristics of Good Primary Support

In order to fulfill the requirements of good primary support, the information you choose must meet the following standards:

- **Be specific**—The main points you make about your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be specific. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. These types of examples give your reader something narrow to focus on, and if used properly, they leave little doubt about your claim. General examples, while they convey the necessary information, are

not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.

- **Be relevant to the thesis**—Primary support is considered strong when it relates directly to the thesis. Primary support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without delving into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you may think you need to include it all in your body paragraphs. But effective writers resist the temptation to lose focus. Choose your examples wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.
- **Be detailed**—Remember that your thesis, while specific, should not be very detailed. The body paragraphs are where you develop the discussion that a thorough essay requires. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

Prewrite to Identify Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement

When you prewrite, you essentially make a list of examples or reasons why you support your stance. Stemming from each point, you further provide details to support those reasons. After prewriting, you are then able to look back at the information and choose the most compelling pieces you will use in your body paragraphs.

Check Your Understanding: Prewriting

Choose one of the following working thesis statements. On a separate sheet of paper, write for at least five minutes using one of the prewriting techniques you learned in the [Pre-Writing module](#).

1. Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.
2. Students cheat for many different reasons.
3. Drug use among teens and young adults is a problem.
4. The most important change that should occur at my college or university is:

Select the Most Effective Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement

After you have prewritten about your working thesis statement, you may have generated a lot of information, which may be edited out later. Remind yourself of your main argument, and delete any ideas that do not directly relate to it. Omitting unrelated ideas ensures that you will use only the most convincing information in your body paragraphs. Choose at least three of only the most compelling points. These will serve as the topic sentences for your body paragraphs.

Check Your Understanding: Selecting Effective Primary Supporting Points

Refer to the previous exercise and select three of your most compelling reasons to support the thesis statement. Remember that the points you choose must be specific and relevant to the thesis. The statements you choose will be your primary support points, and you will later incorporate them into the topic sentences for the body paragraphs.

When you support your thesis, you are revealing evidence. Evidence includes anything that can help support your stance. The following are the kinds of evidence you will encounter as you conduct your research:

1. **Facts**—Facts are the best kind of evidence to use because they often cannot be disputed. They can support your stance by providing background information on or a solid foundation for your point of view. However, some facts may still need explanation. For example, the sentence “The most populated state in the United States is California” is a pure fact, but it may require some explanation to make it relevant to your specific argument.
2. **Judgments**—Judgments are conclusions drawn from the given facts. Judgments are more credible than opinions because they are founded upon careful reasoning and examination of a topic.
3. **Testimony**—Testimony consists of direct quotations from either an eyewitness or an expert witness. An eyewitness is someone who has direct experience with a subject; they add authenticity to an argument based on facts. An expert witness is a person who has extensive experience with a topic. This person studies the facts and provides commentary based on either facts or judgments, or both. An expert witness adds authority and credibility to an argument.
4. **Personal observation**—Personal observation is similar to testimony, but personal observation consists

of your testimony. It reflects what you know to be true because you have experiences and have formed either opinions or judgments about them. For instance, if you are one of five children and your thesis states that being part of a large family is beneficial to a child's social development, you could use your own experience to support your thesis.

Check Your Understanding: Types of Supporting Facts

Types of supporting facts (Text version)

Determine whether the supporting points are facts, judgements, personal observation, or testimony.

1. The most populated province in Canada is Ontario.
2. I don't think Mr. John will be able to complete the marathon.
3. Mrs. Marshall saw Mike eating the last piece of cake.
4. My dad loves to eat his steak well done.

Check your answers:¹

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Writing at Work

In any job where you devise a plan, you will need to support the steps that you lay out. This is an area in which you would incorporate primary support into your writing. Choosing only the most specific and relevant information to expand upon the steps will ensure that your plan appears well thought out and precise.

Tip

You can consult a vast pool of resources to gather support for your stance. Citing relevant information from reliable sources ensures that your reader will take you seriously and consider your assertions. Use any of the following sources for your essay: newspapers or news organization websites, magazines, encyclopedias, and scholarly journals, which are periodicals that address topics in a specialized field.

Watch It: Evaluating Sources for Credibility

[Watch Evaluating sources for credibility \(4 mins\) on YouTube](#)

Choose Supporting Topic Sentences

Each body paragraph contains a topic sentence that states one aspect of your thesis and then expands upon it. Like the thesis statement, each topic sentence should be specific and supported by concrete details, facts, or explanations.

Each body paragraph should comprise the following elements:

topic sentence + supporting details (examples, reasons, or arguments)

Topic sentences indicate the location and main points of the basic arguments of your essay. These sentences are vital to writing your body paragraphs because they always refer back to and support your thesis statement. Topic sentences are linked to the ideas you have introduced in your thesis, thus reminding readers what your essay is about. A paragraph without a clearly identified topic sentence may be unclear and scattered, just like an essay without a thesis statement.

Tip

Unless your teacher instructs otherwise, you should include at least three body paragraphs in your

essay. A five-paragraph essay, including the introduction and conclusion, is commonly the standard for exams and essay assignments.

Consider the following the thesis statement:

Author J.D. Salinger relied primarily on his personal life and belief system as the foundation for the themes in the majority of his works.

The following topic sentence is a primary support point for the thesis. The topic sentence states exactly what the controlling idea of the paragraph is. Later, you will see the writer immediately provide support for the sentence.

Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced themes in many of his works.

Check Your Understanding: Writing Topic Sentences

In the last exercise, you chose three of your most convincing points to support the thesis statement you selected from the list. Take each point and incorporate it into a topic sentence for each body paragraph.

Supporting point 1:

Topic sentence:

Supporting point 2:

Topic sentence:

Supporting point 3:

Topic sentence:

Draft Supporting Detail Sentences for Each Primary Support Sentence

After deciding which primary support points you will use as your topic sentences, you must add details to clarify and demonstrate each of those points. These supporting details provide examples, facts, or evidence that support the topic sentence.

The writer drafts possible supporting detail sentences for each primary support sentence based on the thesis statement:

Thesis statement: Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.

1. **Supporting point 1:** Dogs can scare cyclists and pedestrians.

Supporting details:

1. Cyclists are forced to zigzag on the road.
2. School children panic and turn wildly on their bikes.
3. People who are walking at night freeze in fear.

2. **Supporting point 2:** Loose dogs are traffic hazards.

Supporting details:

1. Dogs in the street make people swerve their cars.
2. To avoid dogs, drivers run into other cars or pedestrians.
3. Children coaxing dogs across busy streets create danger.

3. **Supporting point 3:** Unleashed dogs damage gardens.

Supporting details:

1. They step on flowers and vegetables.
2. They destroy hedges by urinating on them.
3. They mess up lawns by digging holes.

The following paragraph contains supporting detail sentences for the primary support sentence (the topic sentence—the very first one in the paragraph), which is underlined.

Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced the themes in many of his works. He did not hide his mental anguish over the horrors of war and once told his daughter, “You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose, no matter how long you live.” His short story “A Perfect Day for a Bananafish” details a day in the life of a WWII veteran who was recently released from an army hospital for psychiatric problems. The man acts questionably with a little girl he meets on the beach before he returns to his hotel room and commits suicide. Another short story, “For Esmé – with Love and Squalor,” is narrated by a traumatized soldier who sparks an unusual relationship with a young girl he meets before he departs to partake in D-Day. Finally, in Salinger’s only novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, he continues with the theme of posttraumatic stress, though not directly related to war. From a rest home for the mentally ill, sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield narrates the story of his nervous breakdown following the death of his younger brother.

Check Your Understanding: Writing Supporting Details

Using the three topic sentences you just composed for the thesis statement in “Exercise 3”, draft at least three supporting details for each point.

Thesis statement:

Primary supporting point 1:

Supporting details:

Primary supporting point 2:

Supporting details:

Primary supporting point 3:

Supporting details:

Tip

Print out the first draft of your essay and use a highlighter to mark your topic sentences in the body paragraphs. Make sure they are clearly stated and accurately present your paragraphs, as well as accurately reflect your thesis. If your topic sentence contains information that does not exist in the rest of the paragraph, rewrite it to more accurately match the rest of the paragraph.

Attribution & References

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Notes

1. 1. fact, 2. judgement, 3. testimony, 4. Personal observation

WRITING INTRODUCTORY AND CONCLUDING PARAGRAPHS

Picture your introduction as a storefront window: You have a certain amount of space to attract your customers (readers) to your goods (subject) and bring them inside your store (discussion). Once you have enticed them with something intriguing, you then point them in a specific direction and try to make the sale (convince them to accept your thesis).

Your introduction is an invitation to your readers to consider what you have to say and then to follow your train of thought as you expand upon your thesis statement.

An introduction serves the following purposes:

1. Establishes your voice and tone, or your attitude, toward the subject
2. Introduces the general topic of the essay
3. States the thesis that will be supported in the body paragraphs

First impressions are crucial and can leave lasting effects in your reader's mind, which is why the introduction is so important to your essay. If your introductory paragraph is dull or disjointed, your reader probably will not have much interest in continuing with the essay.

Attracting Interest in Your Introductory Paragraph

Your introduction should begin with an engaging statement devised to provoke your readers' interest. In the next few sentences, introduce them to your topic by stating general facts or ideas about the subject. As you move deeper into your introduction, you gradually narrow the focus, moving closer to your thesis. Moving smoothly and logically from your introductory remarks to your thesis statement can be achieved using a funnel technique, as illustrated in the diagram in Figure 1.

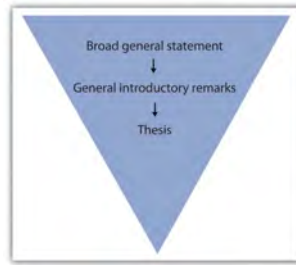


Figure 1. Using the funnel technique, a broad general statement is funnelled down to general introductory remarks, and then to a more specific thesis.

Check Your Understanding: Writing Introductory Remarks

On a separate sheet of paper, jot down a few general remarks that you can make about the topic for which you formed a thesis in [Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement](#).

Immediately capturing your readers' interest increases the chances of having them read what you are about to discuss. You can garner curiosity for your essay in a number of ways. Try to get your readers personally involved by doing any of the following:

- Appealing to their emotions
- Using logic
- Beginning with a provocative question or opinion
- Opening with a startling statistic or surprising fact
- Raising a question or series of questions
- Presenting an explanation or rationalization for your essay
- Opening with a relevant quotation or incident
- Opening with a striking image
- Including a personal anecdote

Check Your Understanding: Capturing Attention

Capturing Attention (Text version)

Imagine you are writing an essay arguing for domesticated cats to be kept indoors. What follows is a list of potentially attention-grabbing first sentences for the introductory paragraph. Match the kind of appeal (a-i) in the list below to the sample sentence (1-9) that provides the best example.

Appeal

- a. Presenting an explanation or rationalization for your essay
- b. Opening with a relevant quotation or incident
- c. Including a personal anecdote
- d. Using logic
- e. Opening with a startling statistic or surprising fact
- f. Raising a question or series of questions
- g. Appealing to their emotions
- h. Opening with a striking image
- i. Beginning with a provocative question or opinion

Sample Sentences

1. A little girl weeps at the untimely death of her beloved cat; an elderly neighbour misses the company of the neighbourhood songbirds.
2. Most people love neighbourhood wildlife and most pet owners love their pets; a mutually beneficial strategy for keeping both safe is to keep cats indoors.
3. Cats are cute, but they are also murderous killing machines bent on destroying your neighbourhood.
4. Every year, cats kill between 100 million and 350 million birds in Canada alone; 38% of those birds are killed by domesticated cats.
5. If you knew there was one single behavioural change that would improve your neighbourhood for generations, would you do it?
6. The purpose of this essay is to protect neighbourhood wildlife from cats, and to protect cats from the hazards of this neighbourhood.
7. "Curiosity killed the cat," goes the famous adage.

8. Imagine the sight of a beloved family cat who has been struck by a car on the highway.
9. When I was a child, our family cat loved to roam free in the neighbourhood. I never wondered why there were no birds in our backyard, like my friends enjoyed and experienced.

Check your answers:¹

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Tip

Remember that your diction (word choice), while always important, is most crucial in your introductory paragraph. Boring diction could extinguish any desire a person might have to read through your discussion. Choose words that create images or express action.

Previously, you followed Mariah as she moved through the writing process. In this chapter, Mariah writes her introduction and conclusion for the same essay. Mariah incorporates some of the introductory elements into her introductory paragraph, which she outlined earlier. Her thesis statement is underlined.

Play Atari on a General Electric brand television set? Maybe watch *Dynasty*? Or read old newspaper articles on microfiche at the library? Twenty-five years ago, the average college student did not have many options when it came to entertainment in the form of technology. Fast-forward to the twenty-first century, and the digital age has digital technology, consumers are bombarded with endless options for how they do most everything—from buying and reading books to taking and developing photographs. In a society that is obsessed with digital means of entertainment, it is easy for the average person to become baffled. Everyone wants the newest and best digital technology, but the choices are many and the specifications are often confusing.

Mariah's thesis statement, "Everyone wants the newest and best digital technology, but the choices are many and the specifications are often confusing", is located at the end of the paragraph.

Tip

If you have trouble coming up with a provocative statement for your opening, it is a good idea to use a relevant, attention-grabbing quote about your topic. Use a search engine to find statements made by historical or significant figures about your subject.

Writing at Work

In your job field, you may be required to write a speech for an event, such as an awards banquet or a dedication ceremony. The introduction of a speech is similar to an essay because you have a limited amount of space to attract your audience's attention. Using the same techniques, such as a provocative quote or an interesting statistic, is an effective way to engage your listeners. Using the funnel approach also introduces your audience to your topic and then presents your main idea in a logical manner.

Check Your Understanding: Mariah's Strategies for Capturing Attention

Mariah's Strategies for Capturing Attention

Below you will see the text of Mariah’s introduction. Match the appropriate phrase in the introduction (1-4) to the attention-capturing strategy (a-d) used.

Introduction

1. Play Atari on a General Electric brand television set? Maybe watch *Dynasty*? Or read old newspaper articles on microfiche at the library?
2. Twenty-five years ago, the average college student did not have many options when it came to entertainment in the form of technology. Fast-forward to the twenty-first century, and the digital age has revolutionized the way people entertain themselves.
3. In today’s rapidly-evolving world of digital technology consumers are bombarded with endless options of how they do most everything — from buying and reading books to taking and developing photographs. In a society that is obsessed with digital means of entertainment, it is easy for the average person to become baffled.
4. Everyone wants the newest and best digital technology, but the choices are many and the specifications are often confusion.

Strategies

- a. Using logic
- b. Presenting an explanation or rationalization for your essay
- c. Raising a question or series of questions
- d. Opening with a startling statistic or surprising fact

Check your answers:²

Activity source: “[Self-Practice 6.4 Identify Strategies to Capture Attention](#)” by Brenna Clark Gray (H5P Adaptation) is based on content from [Writing for Success – 1st Canadian Edition](#) by Tara Harkoff & [author removed], licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

Writing a Conclusion

It is not unusual to want to rush when you approach your conclusion, and even experienced writers may fade. But what good writers remember is that it is vital to put just as much attention into the conclusion as in the rest of the essay. After all, a hasty ending can undermine an otherwise strong essay.

A conclusion that does not correspond to the rest of your essay, has loose ends, or is unorganized can unsettle your readers and raise doubts about the entire essay. However, if you have worked hard to write the introduction and body, your conclusion can often be the most logical part to compose.

The Anatomy of a Strong Conclusion

Keep in mind that the ideas in your conclusion must conform to the rest of your essay. In order to tie these components together, restate your thesis at the beginning of your conclusion. This helps you assemble, in an orderly fashion, all the information you have explained in the body. Repeating your thesis reminds your readers of the major arguments you have been trying to prove and also indicates that your essay is drawing to a close. A strong conclusion also reviews your main points and emphasizes the importance of the topic.

The construction of the conclusion is similar to the introduction, in which you make general introductory statements and then present your thesis. The difference is that in the conclusion you first paraphrase, or *state in different words*, your thesis and then follow up with general concluding remarks. These sentences should progressively broaden the focus of your thesis and maneuver your readers out of the essay.

Many writers like to end their essays with a final emphatic statement. This strong closing statement will cause your readers to continue thinking about the implications of your essay; it will make your conclusion, and thus your essay, more memorable. Another powerful technique is to challenge your readers to make a change in either their thoughts or their actions. Challenging your readers to see the subject through new eyes is a powerful way to ease yourself and your readers out of the essay.

Tip

When closing your essay, do not expressly state that you are drawing to a close. Relying on statements such as *in conclusion*, *it is clear that*, *as you can see*, or *in summation* is unnecessary and can be considered trite.

Tip

It is wise to avoid doing any of the following in your conclusion:

- Introducing new material
- Contradicting your thesis
- Changing your thesis
- Using apologies or disclaimers

Introducing new material in your conclusion has an unsettling effect on your reader. When you raise new points, you make your reader want more information, which you could not possibly provide in the limited space of your final paragraph.

Contradicting or changing your thesis statement causes your readers to think that you do not actually have conviction about your topic. After all, you have spent several paragraphs adhering to a singular point of view. When you change sides or open up your point of view in the conclusion, your reader becomes less inclined to believe your original argument.

By apologizing for your opinion or stating that you know it is tough to digest, you are in fact admitting that even you know what you have discussed is irrelevant or unconvincing. You do not want your readers to feel this way. Effective writers stand by their thesis statement and do not stray from it.

Check Your Understanding: Writing a Conclusion

On a separate sheet of a paper, restate your thesis from earlier in this section and then make some general concluding remarks. Next, compose a final emphatic statement. Finally, incorporate what you have written into a strong conclusion paragraph for your essay.

Mariah incorporates some of these pointers into her conclusion. She has paraphrased her thesis statement in the first sentence.

In a society fixated on the latest and smartest digital technology, a consumer can easily become confused by the countless options and specifications. The ever-changing state of digital technology challenges consumers with its updates and add-ons and expanding markets and incompatible formats and restrictions—a fact that is complicated by salesmen who want to sell them anything. In a world that is increasingly driven by instant gratification, it's easy for people to buy the first thing they see. The solution for many people should be to avoid buying on impulse. Consumers should think about what they really need, not what is advertised.

Tip

Make sure your essay is balanced by not having an excessively long or short introduction or conclusion. Check that they match each other in length as closely as possible, and try to mirror the formula you used in each. Parallelism strengthens the message of your essay.

Writing at Work

On the job you will sometimes give oral presentations based on research you have conducted. A concluding statement to an oral report contains the same elements as a written conclusion. You should wrap up your presentation by restating the purpose of the presentation, reviewing its main points, and emphasizing the importance of the material you presented. A strong conclusion will leave a lasting impression on your audience.

Summary

In this module you learned how to use all of the skills, strategies, and techniques learned to create a five-paragraph essay from prewriting to submission. In the next module, you will learn how to do research and learn more about APA, which are critical skills for writing research essays in university or college.

Attribution & References

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Notes

1. 1. g, 2. d, 3. i, 4. e, 5. f, 6. a, 7. b, 8. h, 9. c.
2. 1. c, 2. d, 3. a, 4. b

UNIT 4: RESEARCH SKILLS

English Degree Entrance Preparation compiled by Carrie Molinski & Sue Slessor.

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Please visit the web version of [English for Degree Entrance Preparation](#) to access the complete book, interactive activities and videos.

Table of Contents

[APA Formatting](#)

- [Why Do We Cite?](#)
- [Integrating Source Evidence into Your Writing](#)
- [APA Title Page Guidelines](#)

[Finding Credible Sources](#)

- [Working with Information](#)
- [Exploring Source Types](#)
- [Source Type: Trade Publication Cues](#)
- [Source Type: Journal Article Cues](#)
- [The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources](#)
- [Research help videos](#)
- [Finding and Evaluating Research Sources](#)

[Paraphrasing & Summarizing](#)

- [Plagiarism](#)
- [Writing Summaries](#)
- [Paraphrasing](#)

Developing Essay Outlines

- [How to Write an Essay: 4 Minute Step by Step Guide](#)
- [Using Sources to Support Your Writing](#)
- [Research Process: Making Notes, Synthesizing Information, and Keeping a Research Log](#)
- [Creating a Rough Draft for a Research Paper](#)
- [Annotated Student Sample: Research Log](#)
- [Creating an Outline for an Essay](#)

APA FORMATTING

Introduction

This module demonstrates the application of citation conventions and the concepts of intellectual property that underpin documentation conventions. You will review the essential knowledge and skills required to use proper citation practices, ensuring that your work remains respectful, credible, and free from plagiarism. The American Psychological Association (APA), also known as the author-date system, stands as a cornerstone of academic citation. You will gain a comprehensive understanding of how to seamlessly integrate in-text citations to support your arguments, bolster your credibility, and acknowledge the contributions of others.

You will learn the pieces of a reference list and how each match any in-text citations used in your essay. By adhering to a consistent and precise format, you will ensure that your writing remains the central focus, free from distracting formatting features. By acknowledging the original authors and giving credit where it is due, you show your commitment to ethical scholarship and academic honesty. Plagiarism, a serious offense in most colleges, can be mitigated through the meticulous application of citation conventions. This module will equip you with the knowledge and skills necessary to avoid plagiarism pitfalls, safeguarding your academic reputation and ensuring the authenticity and originality of your work.

Learning Objectives

- Learn why citing our sources increases communication and gives credit to the original writer, and also avoids plagiarism.
- Implement consistent formatting to create continuity and clarity in your papers.
- Create a reference list containing all the necessary information to find the original source.
- Use in-text citations to show where the information came from originally and match your references.

To Do List

- Read and review “Why Cite our Sources and Integrating Sources” in *APA Style Citation Tutorial*.
- Review the APA Documentation PowerPoint in Blackboard.
- Watch the accompanying videos for this module.
- Complete the Check Your Understanding: Explore the Georgian College Library – APA Guide
- Complete the Check Your Understanding: Explore the Official APA Website – Cover Page
- Complete the APA Referencing Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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WHY DO WE CITE?

Why Cite our Sources

It is important to understand why citations are a fundamental part of any research assignment, aside from being a requirement. A citation is a reference to a source that contains key pieces of information about that source in order to find them. The following are three key reasons why citing is important.

Reason 1: For Scholarly Communication

By reading, analyzing, and including scholarly sources in your assignments, you are contributing to and participating in scholarly communication.

You grow in your understanding of a field of study by learning from its subject experts.

Reason 2: To Give Credit and Show Professionalism

This is key for showing professionalism and evidence in your paper.

You will mainly use scholarly and professional sources as evidence to support your research and give credit to their findings.

Citations allow others (and you) to find the sources used in your paper to learn more about them.

Reason 3: To Avoid Plagiarism

Watch these short videos to learn about plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Check your Understanding: APA Citation Style

Georgian College APA Videos (Text Version)

[Watch What is APA? \(2:30 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch APA title page and paper format \(2:45 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch APA references \(10 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch APA in-text citations \(9 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Introduction to APA citation style workshop \(24 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

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INTEGRATING SOURCE EVIDENCE INTO YOUR WRITING

Writing in an academic context often entails engaging with the words and ideas of other authors. Therefore, being able to correctly and fluently incorporate and engage with other writers' words and ideas in your own writing is a critical academic skill. There are three main ways to integrate evidence from sources into your writing: quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing. Each form requires a citation because you are using another person's words and/or ideas. Even if you do not quote directly, but paraphrase source content and express it in your own words, you still must give credit to the original authors for their ideas. Similarly, if you quote someone who says something that is "common knowledge," you still must cite this quotation, as you are using their sentence structure, organizational logic, and/or syntax.

Integrating Quotations

WHY: Using direct quotations in your argument has several benefits:

- Integrating quotations provides direct evidence from reliable sources to support your argument.
- Using the words of credible sources conveys your credibility by showing you have done research into the area you are writing about and consulted relevant and authoritative sources.
- Selecting effective quotations illustrates that you can extract the important aspects of the information and use them effectively in your own argument.

WHEN: Be careful not to over-quote. Quotations should be used sparingly because too many quotations can interfere with the flow of ideas and make it seem like you don't have ideas of your own. Paraphrasing can be more effective in some cases.

So when should you use quotations?

- If the language of the original source uses the best possible phrasing or imagery, and no paraphrase or summary could be as effective; or
- If the use of language in the quotation is itself the focus of your analysis (*e.g.*, if you are analyzing the author's use of a particular phrasing, imagery, metaphor, or rhetorical strategy).

How to Integrate Quotations Correctly

Integrating quotations into your writing happens on two levels: argumentative and grammatical. At the argument level, the quotation is being used to illustrate or support a point that you have made, and you will follow it with some analysis, explanation, comment, or interpretation that ties that quote to your argument. **Never quote and run:** don't leave your reader to determine the relevance of the quotation. A quotation, statistic or bit of data generally does not speak for itself; you must provide context and an explanation for quotations you use. Essentially, you should create a “quotation sandwich” (see **Figure 1**). Remember the acronym I.C.E.: Introduce–Cite–Explain.

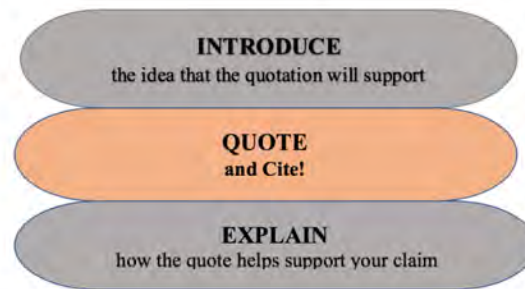


Figure 1: *Quotation sandwich.*

The second level of integration is grammatical. This involves integrating the quotation into your own sentences so that it flows smoothly and fits logically and syntactically. There are three main methods to integrate quotations grammatically:

1. **Seamless Integration Method:** embed the quoted words as if they were an organic part of your sentence (if you read the sentence aloud, your listeners would not know there was a quotation).
2. **Signal Phrase Method:** use a signal phrase (Author + Verb) to introduce the quotation, clearly indicating that the quotation comes from a specific source
3. **Colon Method:** introduce the quotation with a complete sentence ending in a colon.

Consider the following opening sentence (and famous comma splice) from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, as an example:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

1. **Seamless Integration:** embed the quotation, or excerpts from the quotation, as a seamless part of your sentence.

Charles Dickens begins his novel with the paradoxical observation that the eighteenth century was both “the best of times” and “the worst of times” (Dickens, 1859, p. 4).

2. **Signal Phrase:** introduce the author and then the quote using a signal verb (scroll down to see a list of common verbs that signal you are about to quote someone).

Describing the eighteenth century, Charles Dickens (1859) observes, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” (p. 4).

3. **Colon:** if your own introductory words form a complete sentence, you can use a colon to introduce and set off the quotation. This can give the quotation added emphasis.

Dickens defines the eighteenth century as a time of paradox: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” (Dickens, 1859, p. 4).

The eighteenth century was a time of paradox: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”(Dickens, 1859, p. 4).

Editing Quotations

When you use quotation marks around material, this indicates that you have used the *exact* words of the original author. However, sometimes the text you want to quote will not fit grammatically or clearly into your sentence without making some changes. Perhaps you need to replace a pronoun in the quote with the actual noun to make the context clear, or perhaps the verb tense does not fit. There are two key ways to edit a quotation to make it fit grammatically with your own sentence:

- **Use square brackets:** to reflect changes or additions to a quote, place square brackets around any words that you have changed or added.
- **Use ellipses** (three dots): to show that some text has been removed, use the ellipses. Three dots indicate that some words have been removed from the sentence; Four dots indicate that a substantial amount of text has been deleted, including the period at the end of a sentence.

Sample Quotation, Citation, and Reference

“Engineers are always striving for success, but failure is seldom far from their minds. In the case of Canadian engineers, this focus on potentially catastrophic flaws in a design is rooted in a failure that occurred over a century ago. In 1907 a bridge of enormous proportions collapsed while still under construction in Quebec. Planners expected that when completed, the 1,800-foot main span of the cantilever bridge would set a world record for long-span bridges of all types, many of which had come to be realized at a great price. According to one superstition, a bridge would claim one life for every million dollars spent on it. In fact, by the time the Quebec Bridge would finally be completed, in 1917, almost ninety construction workers would have been killed in the course of building the \$25 million structure” (Petroski, 2014, p. 175).

Reference

Petroski, H. (2014). The obligation of an engineer In *To Forgive Design*. Belknap Press.

You are allowed to change the original words, to shorten the quoted material or integrate material grammatically, but only if you signal those changes appropriately with square brackets or ellipses:

Example 1: Petroski (2014) observed that “[e]ngineers are always striving for success, but failure is seldom far from their minds” (p. 175).

Example 2: Petroski (2014) recounts the story of a large bridge that was constructed at the beginning of the twentieth century in Quebec, saying that “by the time [it was done], in 1917, almost ninety construction workers [were] killed in the course of building the \$25 million structure” (Petroski, 2014, p. 175).

Example 3: “Planners expected that when completed the ... bridge would set a world record for long-span bridges of all types” (Petroski, 2014, p. 175).

Integrating Paraphrases and Summaries

Instead of using direct quotations, you can paraphrase and summarize evidence to integrate it into your argument more succinctly. Both paraphrase and summary requires you to read the source carefully, understand it, and then rewrite the idea in your own words. Using these forms of integration demonstrates your understanding of the source, because rephrasing requires a good grasp of the core ideas. Paraphrasing and summarizing also makes integrating someone else’s ideas into your own sentences and paragraphs a little

easier, as you do not have to merge grammar and writing style—you don't need to worry about grammatical integration of someone else's language.

Paraphrase and summary differ in that paraphrases focuses on a smaller, specific section of text that when paraphrased may be close to the length of the original. Summaries, on the other hand, are condensations of large chunks of text, so they are much shorter than the original and capture only the main ideas.

Sample Paraphrase

At the end of its construction, the large cantilever bridge cost \$25 million dollars, but the cost in lives lost far exceeded the prediction of one death for each million spent. While the planners hoped that the bridge would set a global record, in fact its claim to fame was much more grim (Petroski, 2014).

Reference

Petroski, H. (2014). The obligation of an engineer In *To Forgive Design*. Belknap Press.

Sample Summary

According to Petroski, a large bridge built in Quebec during the early part of the twentieth century claimed the lives of dozens of workers during its construction. The collapse of the bridge early in its construction represented a pivotal design failure for Canadian engineers that shaped the profession (Petroski, 2014).

Reference

Petroski, H. (2014). The obligation of an engineer In *To Forgive Design*. Belknap Press.

Regardless of whether you are quoting, paraphrasing or summarizing, you must cite your source any time you use someone else's intellectual property—whether in the form of words, ideas, language structures, images, statistics, data, or formulas—in your document.

Using Signal Verbs

Verbs like “says,” “writes” or “discusses” tend to be commonly over-used to signal a quotation and are rather vague. In very informal situations, people use “talks about” (avoid “talks about” in formal writing). These verbs, however, do not provide much information about the *rhetorical purpose* of the author.

The list of signal verbs below offers suggestions for introducing quoted, paraphrased, and summarized material that convey more information than verbs like “says” or “writes” or “discusses.” When choosing a signal verb, try to indicate the author’s rhetorical purpose: what is the author **doing** in the quoted passage? Is the author *describing* something? *Explaining* something? *Arguing*? *Giving examples*? *Estimating*? *Recommending*? *Warning*? *Urging*? Be sure the verb you choose accurately represents the intention of the source text. For example, don’t use “concedes” if the writer isn’t actually conceding a point. Look up any words you don’t know and add ones that you like to use.

Table C.1: Commonly used signal verbs

Making a claim	Recommending	Disagreeing or Questioning	Showing	Expressing Agreement	Additional Signal Verbs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • argue • assert • believe • claim • emphasize • insist • remind • suggest • hypothesize • maintains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advocate • call for • demand • encourage • exhort • implore • plead • recommend • urge • warn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • challenge • complicate • criticize • qualify • counter • contradict • refute • reject • deny • question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illustrates • conveys • reveals • demonstrates • proposes • points out • exemplifies • indicates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree • admire • endorse • support • affirm • corroborate • verify • reaffirm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responds • assumes • speculates • debates • estimates • explains • implies • uses

Be careful with the phrasing after your signal verb. In some cases, you will use the word “that” to join the signal phrase to the quotation:

*Smith argues **that** “bottled water should be banned from campus”* (fictional quote).

But not all signal verbs can be followed by “that.”

We can use clauses with **that** after these verbs related to thinking:

Think	I think that you have an excellent point.
Believe	He believes that unicorns exist.
Expect	She expects that things will get better.
Decide	He decided that it would be best to buy the red car.
Hope	I hope that you know what you are doing.

Know I know **that** you will listen carefully

Understand She understood **that** this would be complicated.

And after verbs related to saying:

Say She said **that** she would be here by 6:00 pm.
 Admit He admits **that** the study had limitations.
 Argue She argues **that** bottled water should be banned on campus.
 Agree He agrees **that** carbon taxes are effective.
 Claim They claim **that** their methods are valid.
 Explain He explained **that** the rules are complicated.
 Suggest They suggest **that** you follow instructions carefully.

But some verbs require an **object** (a person or thing) before you can use “that”:

Tell tell **a person** that... tell **a story**... tell **the truth**
 Describe describe **the mechanism**
 Convince convince **an audience** that you are credible
 Persuade persuade **a reader** that this is a worthwhile idea
 Inform inform **a colleague** that their proposal has been accepted
 Remind remind **the client** that ...
 Analyze analyze **a process**; analyze **a text**; analyze **the problem**
 Summarize summarize **a text**; summarize **an idea**
 Support I support **the idea** that all people are created equal

It would be **incorrect** to write the following:

- The author persuades **that** ...x
- The writers convince **that** ... x
- The speaker expressed **that** ...x
- He analyzes **that** ...x
- She informs **that** ... x
- They described **that** ...x
- I support **that** ... x

Check Your Understanding: Integrating Quotations

Using the following excerpt from William Zinsser’s “Simplicity”, practice the three integration methods.

“But the secret of good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components. Every word that serves no function, every long word that could be a short word, every adverb which carries the same meaning that is already in the verb, every passive construction that leaves the reader unsure of who is doing what – these are the thousand and one adulterants that weaken the strength of a sentence. And they usually occur, ironically, in proportion to education and rank.” (Zinsser, 1980, p. 7-8)

Integrate portions of this quotation correctly and effectively into your own sentences. If you want to leave out or change words slightly to fit your sentence structure, make sure to follow the rules (using ellipses and square brackets). Also, make sure you are saying something interesting and useful about the words you are quoting (don’t just write “Zinsser says “insert quote”) – make sure your sentence expresses your own idea, and use the quotations to support or develop your idea.

Write your sentences below, using each of the three methods:

1. Seamless Integration
2. Signal Phrase
3. Introduce with a Colon

Summary

In this module, you learned about plagiarism and how to integrate credible sources in your writing using paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting. The Georgian College Writing Centre and Library

Website has many resources to help you with your writing assignments. Use these skills in the following modules and units.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this section is adapted from “[Appendix C: Integrating Source Evidence into Your Writing](#)” In *Technical Writing Essentials* by Suzan Last and Candice Neveu, licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

References

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APA TITLE PAGE GUIDELINES

Georgian College, like all educational institutes, uses a standard format for the submission of assignments. The format/style used is called **APA 7**. You will use this format from this point on when submitting assignments at Georgian. Unless otherwise specified, the utilization of APA 7 is expected.

You will learn more detailed information in the next unit in EDE Prep, [Research Skills](#).

Below is a poster that summarizes general guidelines and shows a sample cover page. Observe the different elements and read the notes in the margin.

Sample Title Page in APA Format

APA 7 Student Cover page Sample (Text version)

General guidelines

- Double spaced on standard 8.5" x 11" paper with 1" margins on all sides
- Page number on the top right corner starting with the cover page
- Check with the instructor for preferred font style and size, but generally Calibri and Arial (11pt); Lucida (10pt); and serif fonts (12pt) are acceptable

1

EDE Prep Sample Cover Page:

What Should Be Included

Young Joon

Academic and Career Preparation, Georgian College

LABS 6000: EDE Prep

Professor Shakira Ramos

September 22, 2022

1. Use upper and lower case for the title and subtitle. Center and bold it in the top half of the paper. Do not use abbreviations and keep it succinct.
2. Student name (without titles).
3. Institutional affiliation (program and institute)
4. Course code and name
5. Professor's name
6. Date of submission

Source: "Sample APA Title Page" by Joanne Pineda, licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

Summary

In this module you learned about why we need to cite, and how to incorporate source materials into your writing. You also learned some introductory information about APA 7 like how to create a cover page and some formatting basics. In the next module, you will learn how to put paragraphs together to create an essay.

Attribution & References

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FINDING CREDIBLE SOURCES

Introduction

In this module, you will learn how to navigate information sources ethically and efficiently, particularly scholarly information. You will begin to understand how to choose relevant information and why it holds significance. You will also establish a vital link between your experiences as a student, the broader scholarly realm, and the practical applications of learning in the post-academic, real world, and professional domains. Drawing upon this understanding, you will learn key concepts for analyzing internet sources—a skillset indispensable for both assignments and everyday life. Armed with this knowledge, you will be equipped to conduct superior research, ensuring the highest quality outcomes in your academic endeavors and beyond.

Course Objectives

- Explore how to find scholarly sources using the Georgian College Library.
- Evaluate sources for credibility.
- Identify key components to evaluating information.
- Evaluate information, to identify the ‘right’ kind of information, and discard the non-useful or irrelevant information.

To Do List

- Read “Working with Information” in *Academic Success*.
- Read “Exploring Source Types” in *Communication Essentials for College*.
- Read “Source Type: Trade Publications Cues in *Communication Essentials for College*.
- Read “Source Type: Journal Article Cues in *Communication Essentials for College*.
- Read “The Research Process” in *Writing Guide with Handbook*.
- Watch Videos Research Help Process from the Georgian College library website.
- Read “Finding and Evaluating Sources” in *Teaching Writing Essentials*.
- Complete the Research Skills Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, “Finding Credible Sources” by Academic and Career Preparation, Georgian College, is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

WORKING WITH INFORMATION

Introduction

Working effectively with information is key to successful study and research. The effective and ethical use of information, especially scholarly information, will form the basis for writing essays, assignments, reports and examinations, and constructing visual and oral presentations. It is important to learn how to find information that ‘matters’ and why it matters. Information and information literacy will provide a link between your life experiences as a student, the wider academic world of scholarship, and the post-academic, real world, and professional applications of learning.

This chapter will help you develop your *Information Literacy*, or the knowledge, skills, and understanding underpinning the *when, what, where, why, and how* of finding, using, and referring to information. As an information-literate person, you will be able to:

- Understand your information needs (*When do I need information? What type(s) of information do I need?*)
- Determine where information is kept (*Where is the best place to find this? Where should I search for the information?*)
- Develop the skills to find the information where it is stored (*What tools are available to help me find the information? How do I use these tools?*)
- Evaluate information, to identify the ‘right’ kind of information, and discard the non-useful or irrelevant information (*Why is this information useful? Why do I trust this source of information?*)
- Record, manage, and reference information effectively (*How will I use the information? How will I reference the source?*)



Figure 5.1 Working effectively with information is key to successful study and research. **Source:** Image by Zen Chung, used under [CCO license](#).

Table 1 outlines the importance of information and information skills for study and for life.

Table 1: Finding and Using Information: Skills for study and life

The 5 W's & H	Question	Other options
When	do you need to use information?	Would facts, data, scholarly research or examples support your writing?
What	type or types of information do you need?	Does the format (text, data, visual, audio-visual); purpose (research, advertising, general information); and timeliness, or currency matter?
Where	(and how) do you find and retrieve information?	Can you find scholarly sources (library searches; databases; Google scholar); facts and figures; news sources; expert opinions and guides (trade publications; handbooks; 'expert' social media)? Are your search skills sufficient to find the 'best information' for your needs?
Why	do you call some information trustworthy?	Can you tell if information is credible, reliable, timely and authoritative? Does the information support your learning and writing? Can you recognise 'fake news?'
How	do you demonstrate care, honesty and respect when using information?	Can you manage information sources carefully? How do you acknowledge the real experts, and stay within legal guidelines? Can you judge the right amount of information to reflect your understanding?

Table source: Adapted to a text-based table from [Figure 5.2 Finding and using information](#) by Tahnya Bella in *Academic Success*, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)

While working with information, it will be helpful if you are willing to develop critical thinking or questioning. This critical approach is the core of developing critical information literacy skills, not just during academic study, but for the rest of your life.

What is information?

Information takes many forms. We tend to think of information as being published in books, journals, magazines and newspapers. However, there are many other types of information—pictures, photographs, videos, cartoons, podcasts, tweets, social media posts, web pages, blog posts, and... the list is endless. Not all information is written text, and not all information is 'officially' published.

It is important to note, however, that *all* information is considered the property of the owner or publisher, whether it is your course textbook, a blog post you found on Google, or a cartoon you found in Pinterest.

Therefore, academic integrity, or the honest, respectful, and ethical use of information sources applies equally to *all information*.

While you are studying, you may need to draw on many different types of information, depending on what you are creating, and how you will use it. Your lecturers will expect you to find relevant information sources, but they will also expect you to be careful and discerning to avoid ‘fake’ or invalid information in an academic context. It is important to recognise not only what types of information sources are, but also which ones are most appropriate for your needs. Following are some information types you will use in the university environment.

Scholarly information

Scholarly information is written by qualified experts (often academics) within a university setting for scholars in a particular field of study. The author is identified, and credentials are available. Sources are documented, and technical language is often used. Understanding this language requires some prior experience with the topic. Attending your lectures and tutorials and completing any assigned readings will help you to develop this understanding. Scholarly information has many forms. These forms include:

Books

Also known as a monograph, scholarly monograph, research monograph, or scholarly book, a book is written by one or more authors and published by a scholarly publisher. The book will discuss a specific topic and even if it was written by a small team, it will read as one cohesive text.



Figure 2: It is best to use your textbooks to develop your understanding and familiarity with the discipline-specific language, and use and cite other forms of scholarly literature in your work.

Source: [Image by Gerd Altmann](#), used under [CC0 license](#).

What about textbooks?

Strictly speaking, a textbook is a scholarly publication. However, textbooks tend to give a broad, general, and introductory overview of a topic rather than the specific information you will need to respond to your assessment tasks. It is best to use your textbooks to develop your understanding and familiarity with the discipline-specific language, and use and cite other forms of scholarly literature in your work.

Book chapter

Also known as a scholarly chapter, or scholarly book chapter, a book chapter appears in a book edited and written by many academics. A book chapter is a discrete entity. This means that although the book will discuss a shared topic, the chapters may present conflicting arguments and perspectives on that topic within the same book.

Peer-reviewed journal article

Also known as a peer-reviewed article, scholarly article, or research article, a peer-reviewed journal article is rigorously reviewed by one or more academics before publication. The review process ensures published articles are factually accurate, report scientifically validated results, and that biases or limitations are noted in the text. For these reasons, peer-reviewed articles are highly regarded by academics. You may sometimes be required to refer to peer-reviewed articles *only* when writing an assignment. There are two variants of peer-reviewed journal article.

Empirical article

Sometimes referred to as a primary article, an empirical article is a peer-reviewed journal article that reports the finding of a research project.

Literature review

The literature review is a peer-reviewed journal article that collates and reports on the research in the field. Some literature reviews attempt to include all of the relevant research that addresses a specific question or area of interest. These literature reviews are called: systematic reviews or systematic literature reviews.

Conference paper

Conference papers may be presented at academic or professional conferences. Although some conference papers are reviewed, the process is rarely as rigorous as that required for peer-reviewed journal articles.

Tip: If you find a relevant conference paper, check whether the authors also published the results in a peer-reviewed journal, as an article will generally be viewed by your markers as being more credible than a conference paper.

Note: However, in fast changing disciplines such as Information and Communication Technology, conferences are highly regarded as the time taken to publish other forms of scholarly information may make them obsolete before they are available to read.

Professional information

Professional information sources are written for professionals in a field. The author is most often identified, however, sources are not always documented by citations and a reference list. The language may or may not be technical. A trade magazine is a professional information source.

Popular literature

Popular information sources communicate a broad range of information to the general public. The author is often not identified and may not be an expert. Sources are often undocumented. It is therefore difficult to assess whether a popular source is reliable. The language used is not technical. Popular information may also be commercial; aimed at selling something (advertising) or persuading to a viewpoint (political or propaganda). Examples of popular information sources include news reports, social media posts, and websites.

Grey literature, also gray literature

Grey literature is authoritative information, often published by government bodies and non-government organisations (NGOs). Grey literature is usually published and made available on an organisation's website. The authors may be individual experts or a panel or committee. Reports, including research reports, literature reviews (not published elsewhere in a journal), policy documents, and standards are common forms of grey literature.

Primary sources

A primary source provides information collected and reported verbatim. Primary sources are often discipline-specific. In Law, primary sources include court reports and legislation. Historians may work with ancient texts. Sociologists may study policy documents. Social scientists in all disciplines often work with interview recordings and transcripts. Other scientists work with raw data and statistics collected in the field, such as weather recordings, or from national repositories: population statistics. A primary source is usually analysed, critiqued, or directly discussed in your work.



Figure 3: Historians may work with ancient texts. **Source:** [Image](#) by Håkan Henriksson, used under [CC-BY license](#).

Finding print and online information

resources

You will need to find a variety of information to complete your study and assessment tasks. It is tempting to read a task and immediately dive into searching. However, a strategic approach will save time and enable you to access the highest quality resources in your discipline. Clarifying the content you are looking for, the appropriate genre/format/type of information for the task, and the best place to look for this information will inform and power your search.

Identify what you need

Before you search, read an assignment task or question carefully. Take note of or highlight all words that indicate the topic of your search. These words will form the beginning of your list of keywords. Also note any instructions around the type of information recommended—or required—to complete the search. This may be general (e.g., scholarly sources) or specific (e.g., peer-reviewed journal articles published within the last five years). If you are unsure of any of the terms used to describe what you need to find, ask your tutor or relevant course contact person before you begin your search.

Identify where to search

Knowing what you are looking for will help you to decide where to search. Scholarly information, grey literature and primary sources are located in a variety of online collections and sites. Some of the places you can find these information sources are provided below.

Searching for scholarly information

Scholarly information is best found via a library search, a direct search of your university database, or via use of the search tool, *Google Scholar*. Library search and database searches have several advantages. These advantages are:

- Subscriptions to journals and other electronic items allow you to access and download most of the information you discover
- Powerful filters and tools to focus your search and reduce the number of unwanted materials in the search results



Figure 4: You will need to find a variety of information to complete your study and assessment tasks. **Source:** [Image](#) by [RE...studio](#), used under [CC0 license](#).

Google Scholar, a Google tool that returns scholarly information, certainly has a place in your search strategy. Google Scholar will give an indication of what has been published on a topic. It can also be used to find additional keywords and phrases for your searches. Google Scholar can also be linked to your university library so you can directly access the resources available to you via your library subscription.

Note: Scholarly information is the most often required information for university study, therefore, the search techniques described later will focus on finding and retrieving scholarly information.

Searching for grey literature

Your library will likely have databases holding grey literature. These databases can usually be found by using the same techniques used to search for scholarly information. However, some specialist information is best accessed online via a *Google Advanced search*.

The Google Advanced search tool allows you to focus your search and restrict it to specific domains or websites. It is a two-part online search form. The top part of the form allows you to construct a search. Look carefully at the descriptors to each side of the various search boxes to create the most effective search. The bottom half of a Google Advanced search allows you to restrict your search by language, geographical region, date of last update, and via site or domain to search a specific website or for a publication available only on government websites. Please speak to a librarian for guidance on searching for grey literature.

Searching for primary sources

Primary sources are found in different places, according to genre/format/type of resource. Please speak to a librarian for guidance on searching for primary sources.

Newspapers

- Current and recent newspaper articles may be available via electronic databases from your university or national library
- Older newspaper articles may be available via national repositories provided by your national library. For instance, Australian newspapers can be accessed in the ‘TROVE’ collection.

Legal sources: Legislation and law

- Legal databases are provided by all university law libraries
- National and international legislation and laws can be found on the World Legal Information Institute (WorldLII) website
- Australia Legislation and law can be accessed on the Australasian Legal Information Institute (*AustLII*) website.
- The laws of your country, state, or territory are also available online on Court and Government websites



Figure 5: Legislation and law reports are primary sources.

Source: Image by [cottonbro](#), used under [CCO license](#).

Data and statistics

- Discipline-specific databases, provided by your library, are a good source of statistics
- ‘World Statistics’: free and easy access to data provided by International Organisations, such as the World Bank, the United Nations and Eurostat
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provides official statistics on economic, social, population and environmental matters of importance to Australia

Search strategies

The search techniques described here focus on finding and retrieving scholarly information. Once you have established what you are looking for and where to look, you are ready to create a search. Your goal now is to locate the information you need while keeping the number of irrelevant results to a minimum. To achieve this, you will need to create a list of keywords and combine these appropriately for your search. You will then apply *filters* to discard many irrelevant results. The final task is to export and save the resources you identify as being most suitable for your need. Some of the steps may need to be repeated as you develop your search strategy. Table 2: *Search flow chart* illustrates the steps. A more detailed description of the steps follows.

Table 2: Search flow chart

Phase	Process	Example
Define Term	Brainstorm and test keywords Look through results to find additional keywords	<i>Brainstorm:</i> handwashing, hand washing <i>Find:</i> hand hygiene in an article identified in the test search
Create search string	Use BOOLEAN Operators to create search string Test and refine search string	<i>Search string:</i> handwashing OR “hand washing” OR “hand hygiene”
Filter results	Use filters to reduce number of unwanted results	<i>Select:</i> Published since 2015, peer reviewed, search abstract only
Access information	Select, export, and save information in desired format	<i>Download and save:</i> PDF files to a folder named <i>handwashing assignment</i> on desktop

Table source: Adapted to a text-based table from [Figure 5.7 Search flow chart](#) by Tahnya Bella in [Academic Success](#), licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)

The first step is to define your terms. First look carefully at your task and highlight the content words—the words that describe the topic. Then brainstorm to create a list of all the synonyms, similar words and phrases that you think may be used to describe the topic in the scholarly literature. Test your list by searching in library search, a database, or Google Scholar. Add any additional words and phrases you discover to your list. In the example provided in Figure 5.7, I added the phrase “hand hygiene” as I saw this in an article retrieved in a test search. You may need to remove words bringing unwanted results. Keep track of your work in a table or list to avoid wasting time by repeating failed searches or losing effective searches.

The second step is to create a ‘search string.’ A search string lists the keywords in a way the databases or other resources you are searching will be able to ‘understand.’ Library search and most scholarly databases require you use language in a precise way. Table 3: *Library and database search strategies* explains this in detail.

Table 3: Library and database search strategies

Operator	Description	Example	Results
AND	focus results	equity AND justice	Results will contain the terms equity AND justice
OR	broaden results	curriculum OR framework	Results will contain either or both curriculum OR framework
NOT	excludes irrelevant results	therapy NOT medical	Results will not contain the term medical. Beware of excluding relevant results
” “	exact phrase	“early childhood”	Results will contain the exact phrase “early childhood”
*	terms that begin with	structur*	Results will contain terms that begin with ‘structur’ i.e., structure, structures, structural, structured...
()	define a concept/topic	biomedicine AND (disease OR infection)	Results will contain biomedicine AND either or both disease OR infection

Table source: Adapted to a text-based table from [Figure 5.8 Library and database search strategies](#) by Tahnya Bella in *Academic Success*, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)

Note: Library search and most databases do not understand natural language, so we need to use a logical framework to structure the search. All letters in the words AND, OR, and NOT must be capitalised or they will often be ignored or replaced with ‘AND.’ Exact phrases must be contained in double quotation marks. To find all associated words starting with the same ‘root’ add an asterisk after the root of the word. Finally, to search for a list of likely words, place the list within parentheses and separate them with OR. Test your search string and make any additions—or remove items—until you are satisfied that your search has captured the relevant resources.

The third step is to use filters to refine your search and remove unwanted results. Filters are a list of options you can select to remove results that are not suitable for your purpose. Filters vary according to the database but often include publication date, type of resource, and whether the resources are peer-reviewed. Filters are located to the left of the screen in most databases.

The fourth and final step is to access the information. Library search and databases will have a few options for exporting your search results. Select one or more items from the list and either save the list to your computer or email the list to yourself. A saved list is useful should you wish to retrieve the documents at a later time or collect the details you need for referencing from the list.

When you are ready to download and read the information you have retrieved, look for a PDF icon. Where available, the PDF will be the official version of the article, book, or book chapter. It will have the correct

pagination and publication details (required for referencing) and will be the fully edited and finished version of the work.

Evaluating information

The American Library Association notes the need to “recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (Association of College and Research Libraries, 1989). We need information almost all the time, and with practise, you’ll become more and more efficient at knowing where to look for answers on certain topics. As information is increasingly available in multiple formats, not only in print and online versions but also through audio and visual means, users of this information must employ critical thinking skills to sift through it all.

You likely know how to find some sources when you conduct research. And remember—we think and research all the time, not just in school or on the job. If you’re out with friends and someone asks where to find the best Italian food, someone will probably consult a phone app to present choices. This quick phone search may suffice to provide an address, hours, and possibly even menu choices, but you’ll have to dig more deeply if you want to evaluate the restaurant by finding reviews, negative press, or personal testimonies.

Why is it important to verify sources? The words we write (or speak) and the sources we use to back up our ideas need to be true and honest, or we would not have any basis for distinguishing facts from opinions that may be, at the least damaging level, only uninformed musings but, at the worst level, intentionally misleading and distorted versions of the truth. Maintaining a strict adherence to verifiable facts is a hallmark of a strong thinker.

Many universities may use some kind of framework to help you evaluate the information you use. These frameworks focus on evaluation techniques and strategies, such as:

- The credibility or credentials of the author, and whether they are an expert on the topic;
- Looking for biases on why or how the information was published, for persuasive or propaganda purposes;
- The validity and reliability of the publisher, and how information is presented and packaged;
- The timeliness of the information, or whether it is still regarded as current; and
- The reliance on verifiable facts and evidence to support any claims or statistics.

This type of framework is a good place to start, especially when thinking about traditional published sources such as books, e-books, journal articles, and resources from library databases. Two examples of these



Figure 6: Maintaining a strict adherence to verifiable facts is a hallmark of a strong thinker.
Source: Image by [Oladimeji Ajegbile](#), used under [CCO license](#).

frameworks are called C.R.A.A.P. (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose) and R.E.V.I.E.W. (Relevance, Expertise, Viewpoint, Intended audience, Evidence and When published).

Although these frameworks provide you with a way to think carefully and evaluate information, they are not perfect, especially for web-based information sources which operate on different rules from traditional published sources (Wineburg et al., 2020). As Johnson (2018, p. 35) states, “No universal formula or checklist can replace the critical thinking needed to determine if information is credible, but checklists and formulas can be a starting point for many students”. You probably see information presented as fact on social media daily, but as a critical thinker, you must practise validating facts, especially if something you see or read in a post conveniently fits your perception. It is important to remember that the internet is also renowned for spreading rumors, fake news and scams. Digital misinformation has even been recognised as a threat to society (Del Vicario et al., 2016). Be diligent in your critical thinking to avoid misinformation!

An example of a contentious information source at university is Wikipedia. Wikipedia is a source that many of us use every week for quick and simple information. However, most lecturers will not appreciate if you rely on Wikipedia for your research, and some may even explicitly forbid it. Why? Wikipedia is widely regarded as being of questionable reliability, because it is a freely available source to which anyone can contribute and the authors cannot be identified (Angell & Tewell, 2017). So any facts presented in Wikipedia need to be explicitly verified in other sources before you can rely on them for academic research. In general, it may be better to rely on other sources for your academic research. A professional, government, or academic organisation that does not sell items related to the topic and provides its ethics policy for review is worthy of more consideration and research. This level of critical thinking and examined consideration is the only way to ensure you have all the information you need to make decisions.



Figure 7: Social media and news sources can be unreliable. **Source:** [Image](#) by Pxhere, used under [CCO license](#).

Other social media and news sources can be equally unreliable. We have all heard of ‘fake news’. When someone publishes an opinion or rumor, a lot of people will read it, and may even believe it without evidence. People tend to rely more on information that reinforces their own beliefs, values and opinions, and will tend to form communities with like-minded others (Del Vicario et al., 2016). This may cause a phenomenon known as ‘confirmation bias’, where people will look for this

information to bolster their own perceptions and ignore any information that may discredit them. Part of critical thinking is striving to be objective and this is very important when it comes to recognising digital misinformation.

Some more questions and strategies to help you evaluate web-based and digital information include:

- Who is responsible for the site (i.e., who is the author)? Look up the author, and see if they have written anything else and if there are any obvious biases present in that writing. Is the topic within the expertise

of the person offering the information?

- Where does the site’s information come from (e.g., opinions, facts, documents, quotes, excerpts)? What are the key concepts, issues, and ‘facts’ on the site?
- Can the key elements of the site be verified by another site or source? In other words, if you want to find some information online, you shouldn’t just Google the topic and then depend on the first website that pops up.
- Can you find evidence that disputes what you are reading? If so, use this information. It is always useful to mention opposing ideas, and it may even strengthen your argument.
- Take into account the funding behind a website. You can check the ‘About’ section of a website, but remember that this is written by the people who are responsible for the website, so it may be somewhat biased.
- You may choose to trust information more when it is published on a government (.gov) or academic (.edu/.ac) website, but be careful about commercial (.com/.co) and non-profit (.org) websites, since these are mostly unregulated.

Managing information and resources

Once you have constructed a search and retrieved the appropriate and relevant information, you will want to manage the information so that it is easy to find, access and retrieve whenever you may need it. If you don’t keep records of the information sources you find and use, it can be very difficult to find them again. At a minimum, you will need to record the referencing details and links to digital information. It is also important to manage a backup system, either on the cloud, or separate physical storage, so you don’t lose all your own hard work.

Academic integrity

In the context of working with information, academic integrity refers to the honest, respectful, and ethical use of information sources in your assignment. You must be honest and indicate where and how often you used information created by others. You must be respectful of the work of others and communicate these ideas correctly. You must be ethical and not claim the work of others as your own, or present work that is merely a list of what others have said on the topic with no added critical or intellectual work of your own. Academic integrity is demonstrated by the accurate attribution of any ideas, direct and indirect quotes, images, or other information you used in your work to the correct information source. Directions on how to attribute correctly are provided by the referencing style guide (or guides) recommended by your university.

Referencing

Referencing is the consistent and structured attribution of all ideas, words, images, statistics, and other information to the source. There are thousands of referencing styles, most falling within the *author-date* or *numbered* families. Check your university website for guidance on the style to use and how to reference in that style. Following is a description of the two referencing ‘families.’

Author-date referencing styles

In these styles, the name of the author (or authors) and the year of publication must be provided as an *in-text citation* whenever you use someone’s words, ideas, images, or other works. Often this means several sentences within a paragraph will contain an in-text citation. The author name and date may be written as part of the sentence, for example: ‘Wang (2017) discovered...’ In-text citations can also be provided in brackets at the end of the sentence. This may look like ‘... (Wang, 2017).’

Author-date styles also include a *reference list*, usually on a separate page at the end of the assessment. The reference list contains everything mentioned as an in-text citation—and nothing else. Each entry in the reference list provides the name of the author/s or creator/s, the date of publication, the title of the work and where it was produced or available online. APA and Harvard are author-date referencing styles.

Numbered referencing styles

Numbered referencing styles require a number in each sentence where someone’s words, ideas, images, or other works have been used. The details of the work—names, dates, title, and location—are provided in *footnotes* (listed in numerical order at the bottom of every page) or *endnotes* (listed in numerical order at the end of your work). AGLC and Vancouver are numbered referencing styles.

Text matching software

Your post-secondary institute may subscribe to text matching (also called plagiarism detection) software, such as Turnitin. These tools search the internet and institute’s assessment repositories to find any text in your assignment that matches other sources, including websites, scholarly literature, grey literature, and other student assignments. If you have the opportunity to submit a draft assignment to such software before you submit your final assignment, please do so as this software generates a report and alert you to any matches.



Figure 8: Academic integrity is demonstrated by the accurate attribution of any ideas, direct and indirect quotes, images, or other information you used in your work to the correct information source. **Source:** Image by [Nick Youngson](#), used under [CC-BY-SA license](#).

Completing this step allows you to use your referencing and paraphrasing skills to correctly attribute all the ideas in your work and avoid plagiarism.

Turnitin and *iThenticate* are examples of software that match text to detect—and help students avoid—plagiarism.

Bibliographic software

Your post-secondary institute may make bibliographic software such as EndNote, Mendeley, RefWorks, Paperly, or others available to students to download to their personal computers and devices – refer to the apps that are available to students at your school. Such software can assist you with referencing. If you would like to use a bibliographic software program, please note that it takes time to learn how to use this software effectively and be able to recognize and correct any referencing errors these programs can create.

Conclusion

Working with information is a skill that can be developed. Information literacy is an important skill for study and also for later professional life. Remember that good information sources will always help you to demonstrate your understanding. However, information should always be used to support and enhance (not to replace) your own learning and ideas.

Summary

In this chapter you learned about how to work effectively with information and how it is key to academic success. You also learned about many types of information including scholarly literature, and grey literature and how to identify which one you need for the task. You have also learned that critical thinking skills are essential when discerning if information is relevant, so you use this information in an honest, respectful and ethical manner including citing and referencing any information from another source.

Attribution & References

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EXPLORING SOURCE TYPES

To identify the correct APA citation elements needed for your reference list citation, you first need to know what type of source you have. Looking at a source’s visual cues and descriptions from a library catalogue or database can help you figure this out.

Now that so many sources are online, it can be a bit confusing figuring out a source’s type. To help, we will go through some examples of source types and cues to look for together.

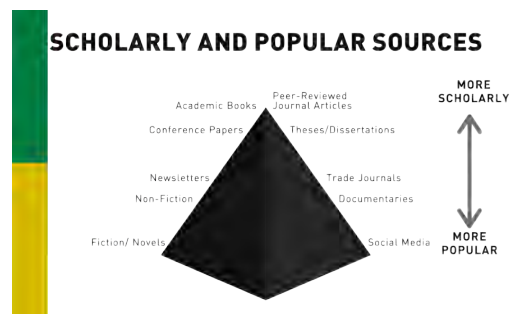



Image of pyramid titled “Scholarly and Popular Sources” “Pyramid of sources” by [University of Alberta Library](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA](#)

Examples are displayed on either side of the pyramid and an arrow on the right-hand side is labelled more popular at the base of the pyramid and more scholarly at the top. Peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference papers, and theses and dissertations are at the top; trade journals, newsletters, non-fiction, documentaries, fiction/novels and social media are at the bottom or widest part of the pyramid.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from “[8.2 – Exploring Source Types](#)” In *Communication Essentials for College* by Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). / An adaptation from “[Exploring Source Types](#)” In *APA Style Citation Tutorial* by Sarah Adams and Debbie Feisst, University of Alberta Library, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License](#). / Adaptations include adjustment of alternate text and CC license updates.

SOURCE TYPE: TRADE PUBLICATION CUES

Examine the source and click on the  symbol to learn about each cue that helps to identify a trade publication.

Trade Journals Cover

Source Type: Trade Journals Cover (Text Version)

Graphics & Ads

Trade publications are generally more like popular magazines than scholarly journals due to their use of graphics. Graphics are present on the cover, in articles illustrating their topic, and as advertisements geared towards the journal's audience.

Specific focus

Trade journals and magazines are created for specific professional fields and contain articles that are generally written by professionals in that field.

Activity source: “8.4 – Source Type: Trade Journals Cover” by Sarah Adams and Debbie Feisst, University of Alberta Library, from “[Source Type: Trade Publication Cues](#)” In [APA Style Citation Tutorial](#) , licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)./ [Screenshot of Teach Magazine cover](#) [Used under Fair Dealing Canada].

Trade Journal Webpage

Trade Journal Webpage (Text Version)

Discovering Trade Journals

Trade publications can be found in library databases and websites. This example (Teach) was found on the journal's website, but it is also found in multiple library databases.

Activity source: “8.4 – Source Type: Trade Journal Webpage” by Sarah Adams and Debbie Feisst, University of Alberta Library, from “[Source Type: Trade Publication Cues](#)” In [APA Style Citation Tutorial](#) , licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.](#) / [Teach](#) [Screenshots of trade publication cover & website main page are used under Fair Dealing.]

Trade Journal Article Page

Trade Journal Article Page (Text Version)

Professional Authors

Articles may have short descriptions of the author's credentials or no description is provided. These credentials may emphasize their professional experience rather than their academic experience. Authors are typically listed right after the title of the article. Occasionally, you might find the author's name at the end of an article or footer of the page (similar to a magazine).

Short Articles & References

Trade publication articles are usually short, with few or no references cited, and focus on a specific topic within the profession (news, products, trends, professional practices, etc.). Authors are often experts in their field, but their articles are not peer-reviewed (i.e. scholarly). Articles may appear in a similar lay out to magazine articles, use more pictures and visual layouts than scholarly journal articles.

Language used

Trade publications use simple language and specific terminology used within their specific field.

Activity source: “8.4 – Source Type: Trade Journal Article Page 1” by Sarah Adams and Debbie Feisst, University of Alberta Library, from “[Source Type: Trade Publication Cues](#)” In [APA Style Citation Tutorial](#) , licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). / [The end of discipline in the classroom](#), Teach, 26-29 [Screenshot of article used under Fair Dealing]

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- This chapter is adapted from “[Source Type: Trade Publication Cues](#)” In [APA Style Citation Tutorial](#) by Sarah Adams and Debbie Feisst, University of Alberta Library, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License](#)
- Stone, A. (2020, January/February). The end of discipline in the classroom. *Teach*, 26-29. https://issuu.com/teachmag/docs/teach_janfeb2020 . [Screenshots of trade publication article are used under Fair Dealing.]

SOURCE TYPE: JOURNAL ARTICLE CUES

In the following source type examples, examine the different sources and click on the **i** symbol to learn about each cue that helps identify a source's type.

First, we will examine a scholarly journal article.

Explore: A scholarly journal article found in the Library database

Explore: A scholarly journal article found in the Library database (Text version)



A scholarly article found in library database search results.

The record in the library database search results displays the following information:

Name of the article: "Watch Out for Their Home!": Disrupting Extractive Forest Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education. Click on the title of the article to view more information about the resource, a brief description of the work, and options to access, save or email the article.

Expert Authors: Nancy van Groll and Heather Fraser

Journal information: Journal of childhood studies (Prospect Bay), 2022, p.47-53. Peer reviewed. Open Access.

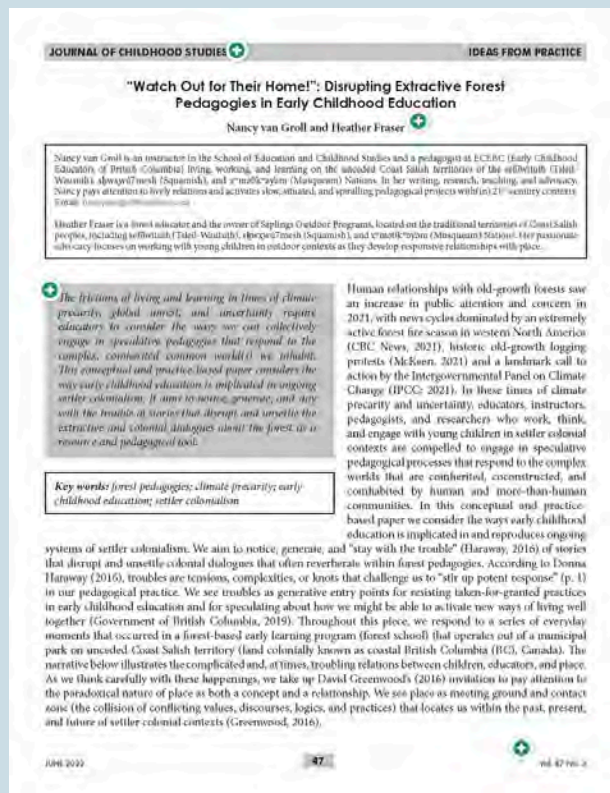
Access options: Click Get PDF to access the whole article in PDF format. Click Available Online for other access options.

Activity source: "[Source Type: Journal Article Cues](#)" In *APA Style Citation Tutorial* by Sarah Adams and Debbie Feisst, University of Alberta Library, used under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) . / Screenshot of

peer-reviewed journal article updated. Article displayed: Van Groll, & Fraser, H. (2022). "Watch Out for Their Home!": Disrupting Extractive Forest Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education. *Journal of Childhood Studies (Prospect Bay)*, 47–53. <https://doi.org/10.18357/jcs202219894> , licensed under [CC BY-NC](#). Screenshot of Primo database is used under Fair Dealing.

Explore: First page of a scholarly journal article

Explore: First page of a scholarly journal article (text version)



Source: "Watch Out for Their Home!": Disrupting Extractive Forest Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education by Nancy van Groll and Heather Fraser, [CC BY-NC 4.0](#)

Name of the Journal: Journal of Childhood Studies

Expert Authors: Nancy van Groll and Heather Fraser

Abstract: The frictions of living and learning in times of climate precarity, global unrest, and uncertainty require educators to consider the ways we can collectively engage in speculative pedagogies that respond to the complex, coinherited common world(s) we inhabit. >This conceptual and practice-based paper considers the way early childhood education is implicated in ongoing settler colonialism. It aims to notice, generate, and stay with the trouble of stories that disrupt and unsettle the extractive and colonial dialogues about the forest as a resource and pedagogical tool.

Volume and Issue Number: Vol. 47 No. 3

Activity source: “[Source Type: Journal Article Cues](#)” In *APA Style Citation Tutorial* by Sarah Adams and Debbie Feisst, University of Alberta Library, used under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) . / Screenshot of peer-reviewed journal article updated. **Article displayed:** Van Groll, & Fraser, H. (2022). “Watch Out for Their Home!”: Disrupting Extractive Forest Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education. *Journal of Childhood Studies (Prospect Bay)*, 47–53. <https://doi.org/10.18357/jcs202219894> , licensed under [CC BY-NC](#).

Source Type: Journal Article Cues

Name of the journal

Journal articles are collected and published in scholarly journals. Often (but not always), the word “journal” in the scholarly journal’s name is a good indicator. Look for the name of the journal in the document header (top left or right corner of each page in the article), or document footer. For peer reviewed journals, the name of the journal typically appears in the top half of the first page, often in the left-hand corner.

Volume & Issue number

Volume and issue numbers are most commonly used with journal articles and scholarly journals. Look for these following the name of the journal and the date/year of publication, typically in the header or footer of

the document. They may be written as: Volume 35, No. 3 or 35(3). The page numbers of the article are often located near the Volume and issue number.

Expert authors

Articles are written by experts in their field who often have high levels of education and professional experience. Their experience may be included in the article. In journal articles, the author's names are often listed immediately under the article title.

Abstract

Abstracts are usually found in journal articles and provide a summary of an article's research findings. Often this summary of the article will be found in the top half of the first page of the article. Some journals use a shaded box to make the abstract stand out from the rest of the text, and abstracts are usually labeled accordingly.

More information found in the library database entry

If you're looking at journal articles in a library database, you can often find a marker that indicates that the material has been peer reviewed. It may be specifically stated, or you may also see the "source type" indicating a scholarly journal.

- **Peer reviewed:** Scholarly journal articles are peer-reviewed by subject experts. Peer-review indicators may be found in database or library catalogue descriptions or on the journal article (*article received*, *article accepted*).
- **Source type:** Library catalogue and database descriptions often identify the source type of a work.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from "[8.3 – Source Type: Journal Article Cues](#)" In [Communication Essentials for College](#) by Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) :

- "[Source Type: Journal Article Cues](#)" In [APA Style Citation Tutorial](#) by Sarah Adams and Debbie Feisst, University of Alberta Library, used under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License](#). / Adaptations

include updates for accessibility and notes on fair dealing use.

- Kirkpatrick, L., Brown, H. M., Searle, M., Smyth, R. E., Ready, E. A., & Kennedy, K. (2018). Impact of a one-to-one iPad initiative on Grade 7 students' achievement in language arts, mathematics, and learning skills. *Computers in the Schools*, 35(3), 171-185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07380569.2018.1491771> [Screenshots of scholarly journal article (in the H5P activities) are used under Fair Dealing.]

THE RESEARCH PROCESS: WHERE TO LOOK FOR EXISTING SOURCES

Once you have chosen your argumentative research topic, developed a workable research question, and devised a plan for your research, you are ready to begin the task usually associated with the term *research*—namely, the collection of sources. One key point to remember at this stage is intentionality; that is, begin with a research plan rather than a collection of everything you find related to your topic. Without a plan, you easily may end up overwhelmed by too many unusable sources. A carefully considered research plan will save you time and energy and help make your search for sources more productive. Access to information is generally not a problem; the problem is knowing where to find the information you need and how to distinguish among types and qualities of sources. In short, finding sources is all about sorting, selecting, and evaluating.

Your specific methods for collecting sources will depend on the details of your research project. However, a good strategy to begin with is to think in terms of needs: *What do you need, as the researcher and writer? What do your readers need?* This kind of needs assessment is similar to the considerations you make about the rhetorical situation when writing an analysis or argument.

Review Table 1 as you conduct a source “needs assessment.”

Table 1: Research needs assessment

Who	Need	More details
Your needs	Basic Facts/Data/Information	These materials help inform you about your topic. They also may help shape the scope of your knowledge of your topic.
Your Needs	Critical/Conceptual/Contextual Sources	These materials provide explanations and context for your research project. They may range from basic historical or contextual information to explanations of special theories or ideologies. These materials will help you with your analysis and will help you address the <i>So what?</i> questions that your research topic may pose.
Readers' needs	Reason to Invest	This material engages readers both intellectually and emotionally.
Readers' needs	Proof That It Matters	These are convincing arguments or illustrative examples that answer the <i>So what?</i> question, showing why anyone should care about the topic or your approach to it.
Readers' needs	Examples and Explanation	These are illustrative examples and explanations of complex, esoteric, or idiosyncratic concepts, theories, technical processes, etc.

Generating Key Words

Before you begin locating sources, consider the research terms you will use to find these sources. Most research is categorized according to key terms that are important for understanding the topic and/or methodologies. When beginning the research process, you may find that the ideas or words associated with your topic are not yielding results when you search library or Internet databases (organized collections of information).

If you are running into challenges locating information related to your topic, you may not have chosen the specific key terms needed. Because libraries and online databases generate search results based on algorithms that target keywords, the best way to find the appropriate terminology associated with your topic is to practice generating key terms. You may need a range of keywords, some for library searches and others for online searches. When considering the difference between keyword searches in academic libraries versus online sources, note that most academic libraries use Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) for subject searches of their online catalogs. Many databases use subject searches based on algorithms that may be unique to that database. Don't become discouraged if you find that the terms for searching in your academic library may be somewhat different from the terms for searching online. As you begin to find sources related to your subject, take notes on the variety of terms that describe your research area. These notes will come in handy as both keyword and subject searches throughout your research process.

The following steps and examples will help you get started:

- Begin by limiting your topic to one or two sentences or questions. (*What effects do a region's water and temperatures have on fall foliage?*)
- Highlight specific words that are key to understanding or finding answers to your question. (*What effects do the amount of water a region gets and temperatures for that region have on colors of fall foliage?*)
- Consider words assumed but not mentioned in your question. For instance, the example question implies a search around trees and rainfall; however, *trees* and *rainfall* are not mentioned. Add these words to the words highlighted in your question.
- Consider synonyms for the words you highlighted. A search for synonyms for *fall* yields *harvest*, *autumn*, and *autumnal equinox*. A search for synonyms for *leaves* yields *foliage*, *fronds*, and *stalks*. Be sure you understand the meaning of each synonym so that you can choose those that best capture the concepts you seek to research.
- Try different combinations of the key terms and synonyms to help you find as many sources as you can.

Locating Sources

Once you have identified sources to fit both your and your readers' needs, you can begin to locate these sources. Throughout the research process, look for sources that will provide enough information for you to

form your own opinions or answer your research question(s). Use source materials as support for your own words and ideas. The following are possible locations for source materials:



Figure 1: New York City Public Library, Rose Main Reading Room.
Source: “[Grand Study Hall, New York Public Library](#)” by [Alex Proimos](#), licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Libraries

While much of your writing and research work happens online, libraries remain indispensable to research. Your university’s physical and/or online library is a valuable resource, providing access to databases, books and periodicals (both print and electronic), and other media that might not otherwise be accessible. In many cases, experienced people are available with discipline-specific research advice. To take full advantage of library resources, keep the following suggestions in mind:

- **Visit early and often.** As soon as you receive a research assignment, visit the library (physically, virtually, or both) to discover resources available for your project. Even if your initial research indicates a wealth of material, you may be unable to find everything during your first search. You may find that a book has been checked out or that your library doesn’t subscribe to a certain periodical. Furthermore, going to the library can be extremely helpful because you likely will see a range of additional sources simply by looking around the areas in which you locate initial sources.
- **Check general sources first.** Look at dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases, and yearbooks for background information about your topic. An hour spent with these sources will give you a quick overview of the scope of your topic and lead you to more specific information.
- **Talk to librarians.** At first, you might show a librarian your assignment and explain your topic and research plans. Later, you might ask for help in finding a particular source or finding out whether the library has additional sources you have not checked yet. Librarians are professional information experts; don’t hesitate to use their expertise.

General Reference Works

General reference works provide background information and basic facts about a topic. To locate these

sources, you will need a variety of tools, including the online catalog and databases, as well as periodical indexes. To use these resources effectively, follow this four-step process:

1. Consult general reference works to gain background information and basic facts.
2. Consult specialized reference works to find relevant articles on all topics.
3. Consult the library’s online catalog to identify library books on your topic.
4. Consult other sources as needed.

The summaries, overviews, and definitions in general reference works can help you decide whether to pursue a topic further and where to turn next for information. Because the information in these sources is necessarily general, they will not be sufficient alone as the basis for most research projects and are not strong sources to cite in research papers.

Following are some of the most useful general reference works to provide context and background information for research projects:

- Almanacs and yearbooks provide up-to-date information, including statistics on politics, agriculture, economics, and population. See especially the *Facts on File World News Digest* (1940–present), an index to current events reprinted in newspapers worldwide, and the *World Almanac and Book of Facts* (1868–present), which reviews important events of the past year as well as data on a wide variety of topics, including sports, government, science, business, and education. In addition to current publications, almanacs from recent years or from many years ago provide information about the times in which they were written.
- Atlases such as the *Hammond World Atlas*, the *National Geographic Atlas of the World*, and the *Times Atlas of the World* can help you identify places anywhere in the world and provide information on population, climate, and industry.
- Biographical dictionaries contain information about people who have made some mark on history in many different fields. Consult the following: *Contemporary Authors* (1962–present), containing short biographies of authors who have published during the year; *Current Biography* (1940–present), containing articles and photographs of people in the news; and *Who’s Who in America* (1899–present), the standard biographical reference for living Americans.
- Dictionaries contain definitions and histories of words, along with their syllabication, and correct



Figure 2: This edition of the *Horsford Almanac and Cook Book* dates from 1887. Published as an “advertising almanac” by a baking powder company, this short almanac featured recipes for a healthful diet as well as general almanac data. **Source:** “[The Horsford 1887 almanac and cook book](#)” by [Science History Institute](#), is in the [Public Domain](#).

spelling and usage.

- Encyclopedias provide basic information, explanations, and definitions of virtually every topic, concept, country, institution, historical person or movement, and cultural artifact imaginable. One-volume works such as the *Random House Encyclopedia* and the *Columbia Encyclopedia* give brief overviews. Larger works, such as the *New Encyclopedia Britannica* (32 volumes, also online), contain more detailed information.

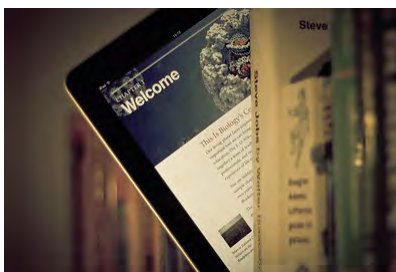


Figure 3: Both print and electronic texts provide excellent general resources for people of all ages. **Source:** “[The future of books](#)” by [Johan Larson](#), licensed under [CC BY](#).

Databases

Databases, usually accessed directly through your library website, are indispensable tools for finding both journal and general-audience articles. Some databases contain general-interest information, indexing articles from newspapers, magazines, and sometimes scholarly journals as well. While these databases can be useful when you begin your research, once you have focused your research topic, you likely will need to use subject databases, which index articles primarily from specialized scholarly and technical journals.

The difference between scholarly journal and other articles is important. Although at times these lines are blurred, think of articles found in popular journals or magazines as published widely and usually addressing a general audience. Such materials are useful for obtaining introductory or background information on a topic as well as a sense of the range of factors to consider. Indeed, these sources may help you narrow your topic by giving you a basic understanding of the range and scope of the “conversation” you are entering in your research process. Scholarly journal articles, on the other hand, typically are written and published by academic researchers. These publications often have more specialized information and vocabulary and are most useful after you have narrowed your topic and developed specific research questions. Within the range of scholarly articles are those that are peer reviewed or found in peer-reviewed journals. These journal articles are generally more specific and contain more reliable information because they are written by experts and reviewed by other experts in the field before the article is published.

A good starting point for research is a general-interest database, which covers a wide range of topics from many sources. Several major general-interest databases are listed below; however, many others may be available at your library. A librarian likely can help you find those that may be specific to your university.

- Academic OneFile from Gale. Based on the access capabilities of your institution, you may be able to use this database, which indexes citations, abstracts, and some full texts in such subjects as the physical sciences, technology, medicine, social sciences, the arts, theology, literature, and more. By using this database, you may be able to retrieve the full text of articles provided in PDF and HTML formats and audio versions of texts in MP3 format.
- Academic Search Complete from EBSCOhost. Your library also may provide you with access to this database, which indexes citations, abstracts, and full text from journal articles, books, reports, and conference proceedings in all disciplines. An advantage of this database is that you can retrieve full-text articles provided in PDF and HTML forms. Academic Search Complete also provides searchable cited references for nearly 1,000 journals.
- CQ Researcher. This general database is unique because it publishes well-researched, single-themed 12,000-word reports by respected journalists who have established ethos because of their history of in-depth, unbiased coverage of health, social trends, criminal justice, international affairs, education, the environment, technology, and the economy. These reports can be beneficial at any research stage because they provide an overview, background, chronology, assessment of the current situation, tables and maps, pro/con statements from opposing positions, and bibliographies. Files from before 1996 are in HTML format; newer ones, beginning January 1996, are PDFs.
- Factiva. Many students find Factiva a useful general tool because it provides full-text news articles and business/industry information from newswires, newspapers, business and industry magazines, television and radio transcripts, financial reports, and news service photos. Within the Factiva database, most content is HTML, though other formats are available for export. The database contains news sources from 1979 to the present and financial data from the 1960s to the present.
- Google. One of the most frequently used databases for any research is Google. Students often use Google to begin their searches because they can find material from many different sources, both formal and informal, including blogs, journals, websites, and popular magazines. For academic research, you may find it useful to begin with a general Google search and then move to Google Scholar. Google Scholar provides a simple way to do a broad search for scholarly literature across a variety of disciplines and sources—articles, theses, books, etc. Within the Google database, you will also find more information or effective uses of Google for your research purposes.
- Opposing Viewpoints in Context from Gale. As you familiarize yourself with your topic, you may find this database helpful for understanding the parameters of the discussion on your topic. Opposing Viewpoints offers over 20,000 pro/con viewpoint essays on controversial issues and current events, plus thousands of topic overviews, primary source documents, social activist biographies, court case overviews, related full-text periodical articles, statistical tables, and multimedia content.
- Gale in Context. This database provides curated topic pages that combine academic journal articles, primary sources, reference works, essays, news sources, multimedia, and biographies about people, events, places, and time periods.

- Web of Science from Clarivate Analytics. The three Web of Science databases index citations from journal articles and conference proceedings in the sciences, social sciences, arts, and humanities. You can access cited reference searches, analyze trends and patterns, and create visual representations of citation relationships. Its contents date from 1900 to the present.

Government Documents

The U.S. government publishes numerous reports, pamphlets, catalogs, and newsletters on most issues of national concern. To access documents published from 1976 and onward, consult the Catalog of U.S. Government Publications. To find documents published prior to 1976, consult the *Monthly Catalog of United States*. Both resources should be available electronically and contain listings for materials in formats such as nonprint media, records, CDs, audiocassettes, videotapes, slides, photographs, and other media. Many of these publications may be located through your university's library catalog as well. Consult a librarian to find out what government documents are available to you and in what forms.

Archives/Special Collections

Many libraries have donated records, papers, or writings that make up archives or special collections containing manuscripts, rare books, architectural drawings, historical photographs and maps, and so on. These, as well as items of local interest such as community and family histories, artifacts, and other memorabilia, are usually found in a special room or section of the library. By consulting these collections or archives, you also may find local or regional atlases, maps, and geographic information systems (GIS). Maps and atlases depict more than roads and boundaries. They include information on population density, language patterns, soil types, and much more. And, as discussed later in this chapter, these materials can figure into research projects as primary data.

University libraries' special collections often house items donated by alumni, families, and other community groups. For example, one state university library's special collections, housing a collection of Black Panther and American Communist Party newspapers and pamphlets, celebrated Black History Month with an exhibit featuring the Black Panther Party and the Black Power movement. Included in the exhibit were Black Panther newspapers and pamphlets published in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as earlier civil rights literature from the American Communist Party. This exhibit not only helped students become aware of information about the time and movement but also demonstrated the range and depth of the university's archive collection.

Interlibrary Loans

Even though libraries house many materials, you may need a source unavailable at your library. If so, you usually can get the source through a networked system called interlibrary loans. Your library will borrow the

source for you and provide some guidance as to the form of the materials and how long you will have access to them.

Whichever search tool you use, nothing is magic about information gathered. You will need to use critical skills to evaluate materials gathered from sources, and you will still need to ask these basic questions: Is the author identified? Is that person a professional in the field or an interested amateur? What are their biases likely to be? Does the document represent an individual's opinion or peer-reviewed research?

Evaluating Sources

One key to judging the validity of sources is analysis. You already may be familiar with analysis, which involves looking at texts, media, or other artifacts to examine their individual parts and make interpretive claims about them. In the research process, analysis involves collecting data, deciding how you want to use that data (*what are you looking for?*), and applying those criteria to your data. For example, if you were looking at how the presence of social media has changed in television programs in the last five to seven years, you would determine what shows you want to view and what patterns you want to study.

As you analyze sources, you evaluate them in terms of your research needs. On the basis of your needs assessment, you will determine whether a source is acceptable or unacceptable, good or bad, trustworthy or biased. Although firm categories can be useful, you may find a more nuanced evaluation helpful as well. When you look for sources and evaluate them, begin with general questions such as these:

- How do I want to use this source?
- Am I able to use it in that way?
- Might this source be more valuable if used in another way?

When you ask whether a source is acceptable, the answer usually depends on what you want to do with it. Even biased, false, or misleading material can be useful, depending on how a researcher puts it to use. For instance, you may be writing about a particular historical event and come across a magazine article featuring a biased account of that event. If your purpose is to write a brief but accurate description of the event, then this account is of little use. *But what if your purpose is to write a critical analysis of the ways in which misleading media coverage of an event has influenced public perception of it?* Suddenly, the biased account becomes useful as a specific example of the media coverage you wish to analyze.

A source's value, therefore, is a function of your purpose for it. Labeling a source as good or bad, truthful or misleading, doesn't really evaluate its use to you as a researcher and writer; truthful sources can be used poorly, and misleading sources can be used effectively. What matters is whether the source fits your purpose.

Finally, when evaluating a source, consider time (*when was it judged true?*) and perspective (*who said it was true, and for what reason?*).

Locate the Date

Most documents, especially those created since the advent of copyright laws at the end of the 19th century, include their date of publication. Pay attention to the date a source was created and reflect on what might have happened since then. Information may be outdated and useless. On the other hand, it may still be highly useful—and continuing usefulness is the reason many old texts remain in circulation. Once you locate the source’s date, you can decide whether it will be relevant for your purpose. If you are studying change over time, for example, old statistical information would be useful baseline data to demonstrate what has changed. But if you are studying current culture, dated information may be misleading. In other words, when evaluating whether a dated source serves your purpose, know what that purpose is.

Identify Perspective

To identify and evaluate perspective, ask what viewpoint, or perspective, it represents. *Who created the source, and for what purpose?* This question can be difficult to answer immediately because an author’s viewpoint is not always identified or summarized in the source itself—and when it is, the information provided, being a creation of the author, cannot always be believed. To trust a source, you need to analyze its assumptions, evidence, biases, and reasoning, which together constitute the author’s perspective. In essence, you need to ask these questions: *What is this writer’s purpose? Is it scholarly analysis, political advocacy, entertainment, or something else?* Consider the following:

- Will a quick perusal of the introduction or first chapter reveal the writer’s assumptions about the subject or audience?
- Can you tell which statements are facts, which are inferences drawn from facts, and which are strictly opinions?
- Does a first reading of the evidence persuade you? Is the logic of the position apparent and/or credible?
- Does the writer omit relevant points?
- Do the answers to these questions make you more or less willing to accept the author’s conclusions?

Although trying to answer these questions about every source may seem daunting or even futile at first, have patience and give the research process the time it needs. At the beginning of a research project, when you are still trying to gain context and overview and have looked at only one source, you likely will have difficulty recognizing an author’s purpose and viewpoint. However, as you read further and begin to compare and contrast one source with another, differences will emerge, especially if you read extensively and take notes. The more differences you note, the more critically aware you become and the more you understand how and where a source might help you.

Review Critically

To review a source with a critical eye, ask both first and second questions of the text. The answers to first questions are generally factual, the result of probing the text (identifying the title, table of contents, chapter headings, index, and so on). The answers to second questions are more inferential, the result of analyzing assertions, evidence, and language in the text (identifying the perspective of the author and their sources).

Review Internally

Does information in one source support or contradict information in other sources? Do a subject search of the author across platforms to find out how other experts view the author and how your source fits in with the author's other works.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this section is adapted from “[13.1 The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources](#)” In *Writing Guide with Handbook* by Michelle Bachelor Robinson, Maria Jerskey, featuring Toby Fulwiler, licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#). Access for free at [Writing Guide with Handbook \(OpenStax\)](#)

RESEARCH HELP VIDEOS

Watch It: Research Help Videos

Research Help Videos (Text Version)

[Watch Accessing Page 1+ and other library resources \(1 minute\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Research guides what are they for, and what's in them -2022 \(2 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Searching keywords in Page 1+ \(2 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Using AND & OR in Page 1+ \(2:30 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Search results the good, the bad, and the ugly – 2022 \(2:30 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch What on Earth does 'peer-reviewed' mean, anyway? \(2 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Evaluating resources \(5:30 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Evaluating resources digging deeper \(3 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Evaluating articles with the CRAAP test \(5 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Getting to the good stuff accessing better web content \(3 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch So you found something on the web: Should you use it or lose it \(3 mins\) on YouTube](#)

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FINDING AND EVALUATING RESEARCH SOURCES

In this “information age” when so much information is available at our fingertips on the internet, it is crucial to be able to critically search through the reams of information in order to select *credible* sources that can provide *reliable and useful* data to support your ideas and convince your audience. In the era of “fake news,” deliberate misinformation, and “alternative facts,” developing the skill to evaluate the credibility of sources is critical.

In [previous sections of this text](#), you became familiar with academic journals and how they differ from popular sources, as in **Figure 1**. If you would like to refresh your memory on this, watch UVic library’s video on [Scholarly and Popular Sources \[New tab\]](#). These contain peer-reviewed articles written by scholars, often presenting their original research, reviewing the original research of others, or performing a “meta-analysis” (an analysis of multiple studies that analyze a given topic).



Figure 1 Examples of Popular vs Scholarly Sources.¹

Scholarly articles published in academic journals are usually required sources in academic research essays; they are also an integral part of engineering projects and technical reports. Many projects require a [literature review \[New Tab\]](#), which collects, summarizes and sometimes evaluates the work of researchers in this field whose work has been recognized as a valuable contribution to the “state of the art.” However, they are not the only kind of research you will find useful. Since you are researching in a professional field and preparing for the workplace, there are many credible kinds of sources you will draw on in a professional context. **Table 1** lists several types of sources you may find useful in researching your projects.

Table 1: Typical research sources for technical projects

[Skip Table]	
Source Type	Description
Academic Journals, Conference Papers, Dissertations, etc.	<p>Scholarly (peer-reviewed) academic sources publish primary research done by professional researchers and scholars in specialized fields, as well as reviews of that research by other specialists in the same field.</p> <p>For example, the <i>Journal of Computer and System Sciences</i> publishes original research papers in computer science and related subjects in system science; <i>International Journal of Robotics and Animation</i> is one of the most highly ranked journals in the field.</p>
Reference Works	<p>Specialized encyclopaedias, handbooks and dictionaries can provide useful terminology and background information.</p> <p>For example, the <i>Kirk-Othmer Encyclopedia of Chemical Technology</i> is a widely recognized authoritative source.</p> <p>Do not cite <i>Wikipedia</i> or <i>dictionary.com</i> in a technical report.</p>
Books Chapters in Books	<p>Books written by specialists in a given field and which contain a References section can be very helpful in providing in-depth context for your ideas.</p> <p>For example, <i>Designing Engineers</i> by Susan McCahan et al. has an excellent chapter on effective teamwork.</p>
Trade Magazines and Popular Science Magazines	<p>Reputable trade magazines contain articles relating to current issues and innovations, and therefore they can be very useful in determining the “state of the art” or what is “cutting edge” at the moment, or finding out what current issues or controversies are affecting the industry.</p> <p>Examples include <i>Computerworld</i>, <i>Wired</i>, and <i>Popular Mechanics</i>.</p>
Newspapers (Journalism)	<p>Newspaper articles and media releases can offer a sense of what journalists and people in industry think the general public should know about a given topic. Journalists report on current events and recent innovations; more in-depth “investigative journalism” explores a current issue in greater detail. Newspapers also contain editorial sections that provide personal opinions on these events and issues.</p> <p>Choose well-known, reputable newspapers such as <i>The New York Times</i>.</p>
Industry Websites (.com)	<p>Commercial websites are generally intended to “sell,” so you have to select information carefully, but these websites can give you insights into a company’s “mission statement,” organization, strategic plan, current or planned projects, archived information, white papers, technical reports, product details, costs estimates, etc.</p>
Organization Websites (.org)	<p>A vast array of .org sites can be very helpful in supplying data and information. These are often public service sites and are designed to share information with the public.</p>

Government Publications and Public Sector Web Sites (.gov/.edu/.ca)	<p>Government departments often publish reports and other documents that can be very helpful in determining public policy, regulations, and guidelines that should be followed.</p> <p>Statistics Canada, for example, publishes a wide range of data.</p> <p>University websites also offer a wide array of non-academic information, such as strategic plans, facilities information, <i>etc.</i></p>
Patents	<p>You may have to distinguish your innovative idea from previously patented ideas; you can look these up and get detailed information on patented or patent-pending ideas.</p>
Public Presentations	<p>Public Consultation meetings and representatives from industry and government speak to various audiences about current issues and proposed projects. These can be live presentations or video presentations available on YouTube or TED talks.</p>
Other	<p>Can you think of some more? (Radio programs, Podcasts, Social Media, <i>etc.</i>)</p>

The importance of critically evaluating your sources for authority, relevance, timeliness, and credibility cannot be overstated. *Anyone can put anything on the internet*; and people with strong web and document design skills can make this information look very professional and credible—even if it isn’t. Since much research is currently done online, and many sources are available electronically, developing your critical evaluation skills is crucial to finding valid, credible evidence to support and develop your ideas. In fact, this has become such a challenging issue that there are sites like this resource on [Predatory Publishers](#) from University of Saskatchewan that regularly update its online list of journals that subvert the peer review process and simply publish for profit.

H.G. Wells has been (mis)quoted as stating, “statistical thinking will one day be as necessary for efficient citizenship as the ability to read and write” (Cook, n.d.). On the other hand, Mark Twain (supposedly quoting British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli) famously said, “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.” The fact that the actual sources of both of these “quotations” are unverifiable makes their sentiments no less true. The effective use of statistics can play a critical role in influencing public opinion as well as persuading in the workplace. However, as the fame of the second quotation indicates, statistics can be used to mislead rather than accurately inform—whether intentionally or unintentionally.

When evaluating research sources and presenting your own research, be careful to critically evaluate the **authority, content, and purpose** of the material, using questions in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Evaluate the authority, content, and purpose of information

[Skip Table]	
Authority Researchers Authors Creators	<p>Who are the researchers/authors/creators? Who is their intended audience? What are their credentials/qualifications? What else has this author written? Is this research funded? By whom? Who benefits? Who has intellectual ownership of this idea? How do I cite it? Where is this source published? What kind of publication is it?</p> <p>Authoritative Sources: written by experts for a specialized audience, published in peer-reviewed journals or by respected publishers, and containing well-supported, evidence-based arguments.</p> <p>Popular Sources: written for a general (or possibly niche) public audience, often in an informal or journalistic style, published in newspapers, magazines, and websites with a purpose of entertaining or promoting a product; evidence is often “soft” rather than hard.</p>
Content	<p>Methodology</p> <p>What is the methodology of their study? Or how has evidence been collected? Is the methodology sound? Can you find obvious flaws? What is its scope? Does it apply to your project? How? How recent and relevant is it? What is the publication date or last update?</p> <hr/> <p>Data</p> <p>Is there sufficient data here to support their claims or hypotheses? Do they offer quantitative and/or qualitative data? Are visual representations of the data misleading or distorted in some way?</p>
Purpose Intended Use and Intended Audience	<p>Why has this author presented this information to this audience? Why am I using this source? Will using this source bolster my credibility or undermine it? Am I “cherry picking”, using inadequate or unrepresentative data that only supports my position (and ignores substantial amount of data that contradicts it)? Could “cognitive bias” be at work here? Have I only consulted the kinds of sources I know will support my idea? Have I failed to consider alternative kinds of sources? Am I representing the data I have collected accurately? Are the data statistically relevant or significant?</p>

Given the pie chart in **Figure 2**, if you only consulted articles that rejected global warming in a project related to the issue of climate change, you could be guilty of cherry picking and cognitive bias.

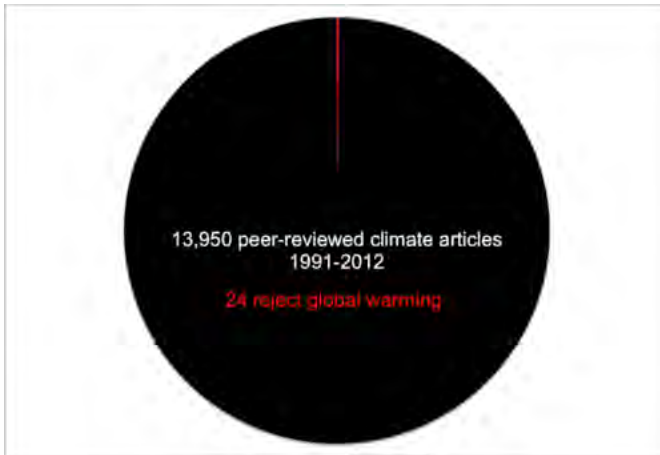


Figure 2 *The number of articles that reject global warming out of all peer-reviewed climate articles within a 21 year time period (Powell, 2012).*

Beware of Logical Fallacies

There are many logical fallacies that both writers and readers can fall prey to (see **Table 3**). It is important to use data ethically and accurately, and to apply logic correctly and validly to support your ideas.

Table 3: Common logical fallacies

[Skip Table]	
Bandwagon Fallacy	Argument from popularity: <i>“everyone else is doing it, so we should too!”</i>
Hasty Generalization	Using insufficient data to come to a general conclusion. <i>An Australian stole my wallet; therefore, all Australians are thieves!</i>
Unrepresentative Sample	Using data from a particular subset and generalizing to a larger set that may not share similar characteristics. <i>e.g.: giving a survey to only female students under 20 and generalizing results to all students.</i>
False Dilemma	“Either/or fallacy”: presenting only two options when there are usually more possibilities to consider. <i>e.g.: You’re either with us or against us.</i>
Slippery Slope	Claiming that a single cause will lead, eventually, to exaggerated catastrophic results.
Slanted Language	Using language loaded with emotional appeal and either positive or negative connotation to manipulate the reader.
False Analogy	Comparing your idea to another that is familiar to the audience but which may not have sufficient similarity to make an accurate comparison. <i>e.g.: Governing a country is like running a business.</i>
<i>Post hoc, ergo prompter hoc</i>	“After this; therefore, because of this” <i>e.g.: A happened, then B happened; therefore, A caused B.</i> Just because one thing happened first, does not necessarily mean that the first thing caused the second thing.
Begging the Question	Circular argument—assuming the truth of the conclusion by its premises. <i>e.g.: never lie; therefore, I must be telling the truth.</i>
<i>Ad hominem</i>	An attack on the person making an argument does not really invalidate that person’s argument. It might make them seem a bit less credible, but it does not dismantle the actual argument or invalidate the data.
Straw Man Argument	Making a “straw man” argument means restating the opposing idea in an inaccurately absurd or simplistic manner to more easily refute or undermine it.
Others?	There are many more... can you think of some? For a bit of fun, check out Spurious Correlations [New Tab] .

We all have biases when we write or argue; however, when evaluating sources, you want to be on the lookout

for bias that is unfair, one-sided, or slanted. Consider whether the author has acknowledged and addressed opposing ideas, potential gaps in the research, or limitations of the data. Look at the kind of language the author uses: is it slanted, strongly connotative, or emotionally manipulative? Is the supporting evidence presented logically, credibly, and ethically? Has the author cherry-picked or misrepresented sources or ideas? Does the author rely heavily on emotional appeal?

[Critical thinking \[New Tab\]](#) lies at the heart of evaluating sources. You want to be rigorous in your selection of evidence, because once you use it in your paper, it will either bolster your own credibility or undermine it.

Watch It: Evaluating Sources

[Watch Evaluating sources \(5 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

Summary

In this module, you learned how to identify and evaluate credible sources as well as reviewed different source types. You will use this knowledge in the next module as you learn how to integrate the source material into your own work.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from “[5.2 Finding and Evaluating Research Sources](#)” In *Technical Writing Essentials* by Suzan Last licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

Reference

Cook, J. [James Cook]. (n.d.). *Statistical thinking will one day be as necessary for efficient citizenship as the ability to read and write* [Comment on the online forum post *What is the source of the H.G. Wells quote, “Statistical thinking will one day be as necessary for efficient citizenship as the ability to read and write”?*]. Quora. <https://qr.ae/pya3oH>

Powell, J. L. (2012, November 15). *Why climate deniers have no scientific credibility – In one pie chart*. DeSmog. <https://www.desmog.com/2012/11/15/why-climate-deniers-have-no-credibility-science-one-pie-chart/>

Notes

1. Cover images from journals are used to illustrate difference between popular and scholarly journals, and are for noncommercial, educational use only.

PARAPHRASING & SUMMARIZING

Introduction

When you think of academic integrity, the term “plagiarism” conjures up all kinds of thoughts including the academic penalty all educational institutions follow. Plagiarism is the act of using another person’s words or ideas and passing them off as your own, without proper acknowledgment. Plagiarism manifests in various forms; for example, a student seeking to evade the task of writing a paper by duplicating content found on the web or a songwriter pilfering lyrics from a fellow band member. Regardless of the context, plagiarism stands as a moral and ethical wrong. Deliberate plagiarism is a calculated misrepresentation, intended to deceive the reader and undermine the trust that should be placed in the author.

Thankfully, there exists a legitimate process of presenting ideas from source material in a personalized manner—paraphrasing. Unlike summarizing, where the content is condensed, paraphrasing involves the expression of thoughts from the original source using one’s own words while retaining a comparable length to the original material being paraphrased.

In this chapter, you will learn about the complexities of plagiarism and the art of summarizing and paraphrasing. You will learn the principles that underlie these practices, and you will gain the tools necessary to navigate the world of intellectual honesty and integrity, ensuring that your academic works are built upon a foundation of ethical scholarship.

Learning Objectives

- Apply citation conventions systematically in your work, understanding the concepts of intellectual property that motivate documentation conventions.
- Compose texts that integrate the writer’s ideas with those from appropriate sources.
- Identify how summarizing and paraphrasing work together.
- Apply paraphrasing techniques of changing words and sentence structures.
- Integrating quotations provides direct evidence from reliable sources to support your argument.
- Use the words of credible sources conveys your credibility.

To Do List

- Read “Plagiarism” in *The Worry-Free Writer*
- Watch video on “Plagiarism” using the Georgian College library website.

- Read “Writing Summaries” in *Advanced English*.
- Read “Paraphrasing” in *Advance English*
- Read “Integrating Source Evidence into Your Writing” in *Technical Writing Essentials*.
- Complete the Plagiarism Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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PLAGIARISM

The term plagiarism is derived from the Latin word for “kidnapper.” When you plagiarize, you essentially ‘kidnap’ another person’s words or ideas and pass them off as your own without acknowledgement.

Plagiarism is often a deliberate act. Whether a student is trying to get out of writing a paper and copies one from the web or a songwriter ‘steals’ lyrics from a band member, plagiarism is wrong. Deliberate plagiarism is an intentional misrepresentation meant to deceive the reader.

However, plagiarism can also be unintentional. On an old episode of *Seinfeld*, the character of Elaine creates a political cartoon for the *New York Times*, only to find later that it was an exact copy of another comic strip. You can read a [plot summary of “The Cartoon” episode](#) on Wikipedia.

This often happens in music and poetry, too. These are often not deliberate acts of plagiarism, but they are plagiarism just the same and can lead to negative consequences for the perpetrator. For example, when MC Hammer used some of the music from the song “Super Freak” in his song “Can’t Touch This,” it resulted in a lawsuit.

Students often plagiarize unintentionally, as well, simply because they do not realize what should be cited. For example, a student might include a statistic in his/her paper and not give the source. That is plagiarism. If a student copies a sentence or two from a Wikipedia article and gives the source in parentheses after the quote, but does not put the quote in quotations marks, that is plagiarism.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Student plagiarism most often occurs during note taking or drafting, as students rushing to complete a thought insert a quote, with every intention to go back and properly cite the source. Of course, once the paper is done, those good intentions mean little when the student can’t remember what a quote was and what was the student’s own idea.

One way to avoid unintentional plagiarism is to begin by writing down your own ideas first. Put an asterisk * in the text where you know you want to insert a quote, but don’t put the quote in yet. This method ensures that you are consciously inserting quotes at a time when you can take the time to cite the source properly. One side benefit of this method is that you don’t lose your train of thought while writing. Another is that you are focusing on your own words and ideas—not simply reporting what others have said. In fact, APA guidelines state that no more than 20% of a text should be referenced from other sources.

Another important step is to carefully check your text against each source. Make sure that all direct quotes are properly enclosed in quotation marks and cited. Double check that any paraphrases are also cited properly.

Georgian College students can visit the Writing Centre where the students can learn more effectively and

efficiently, earn higher grades, become independent learners and persist throughout their studies and beyond. The Writing Centre is not an editing service, but rather works to help students become stronger and more confident writers.

- For more information contact AcademicSuccess@georgiancollege.ca
- Review the [Academic Success Policies and Procedures](#)

Note that ideas that are common knowledge do not need to be cited. Common knowledge includes well-known facts or general knowledge (like the number of states in the United States of America or the team that won the Super Bowl). Sometimes what is common knowledge in the field you are studying may not be common knowledge to you. But, if you see the same thing over and over again in all of your sources, this is probably common knowledge. When in doubt, always cite!

Consequences of Plagiarism

The consequences of plagiarism vary widely, depending on the writing situation. Songwriters caught plagiarizing face hefty fines, as well as the possible end to their careers. Academic writers may lose their jobs. Students can receive failing grades or even be expelled from school. Regardless of your writing situation, your credibility as a writer, a person and a researcher is compromised. Take the extra time to verify your sources and give credit where credit is due.

Learn more about Plagiarism

To know more about plagiarism, check out [Georgian College Library Plagiarism Tutorial](#).

Attribution & References

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WRITING SUMMARIES

A summary is a short overview of the main points of a text. The purpose of a summary is to quickly give the reader or listener an idea of what this material is saying. You may create summaries of material by other authors, such as articles, plays, films, lectures, stories, or presentations.

Why Summarize?

At some point in your classes, you will likely be given an assignment to summarize a specific text, an assignment in which summary is the sole intent. You will also use summaries in more holistic ways, though, incorporating them along with paraphrase, quotation, and your own opinions into more complex pieces of writing. You might summarize for several reasons, both in your time as a student and in your life outside of education.

Here are some common uses:

- A summary can show your understanding of the main points of an assigned reading or viewing, so your instructor might ask you to summarize in order to know that you've understood the material.
- You might summarize a section from a source, or even the whole source, when the ideas in that source are critical to an assignment you are working on and you feel they need to be included, but they would take up too much space in their original form.
- You might also summarize when the general ideas from a source are important to include in your work, but the details included in the same section as those main ideas aren't needed for you to make your point. For example, technical documents or in-depth studies might go into much, much more detail than you are likely to need to support a point you are making for a general audience. These are situations in which a summary might be a good option.
- Summarizing is also an excellent way to double-check that you understand a text—if you can summarize the ideas in it, you likely have a good grasp on the information it is presenting. This can be helpful for school-related work, such as studying for an exam or researching a topic for a paper, but is also useful in daily life when you encounter texts on topics that are personally or professionally interesting to you.

What Makes Something a Summary?

When you ask yourself, after reading an article (and maybe even reading it two or three times), “What was

that article about?” and you end up jotting down—from memory, without returning to the original article to use its language or phrases—three things that stood out as the author’s main points, you are summarizing.

Summaries have several key characteristics.

You’re summarizing well when you:

- Use your own words.
- Significantly condense the original text.
- Provide accurate representations of the main points of the text they summarize.
- Avoid personal opinion.

Summaries are much shorter than the original material—a general rule is that they should be no more than 10% to 15% the length of the original, and they are often even shorter than this.

It can be easy and feel natural, when summarizing an article, to include our own opinions. We may agree or disagree strongly with what this author is saying, or we may want to compare their information with the information presented in another source, or we may want to share our own opinion on the topic. Often, our opinions slip into summaries even when we work diligently to keep them separate. These opinions are not the job of a summary, though. A summary should *only* highlight the main points of the article.

Focusing on just the ideas that best support a point we want to make or ignoring ideas that don’t support that point can be tempting. This approach has two significant problems, though:

First, it no longer correctly represents the original text, so it misleads your reader about the ideas presented in that text. A summary should give your reader an accurate idea of what they can expect if we pick up the original article to read.

Second, it undermines your own credibility as an author to not represent this information accurately. If readers cannot trust an author to accurately represent source information, they may not be as likely to trust that author to thoroughly and accurately present a reasonable point.

How Should I Organize a Summary?

Like traditional essays, summaries have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. What these components look like will vary some based on the purpose of the summary you’re writing. The introduction, body, and conclusion of work focused specifically around summarizing something is going to be a little different than in work where summary is not the primary goal.

Introducing a Summary

One of the trickier parts of creating a summary is making it clear that this is a summary of someone else’s

work; these ideas are not your original ideas. You will almost always begin a summary with the author, title, and thesis of the piece. This information will appear again in your Works Cited, but is also useful here so the reader can follow the conversation happening in your paper. You will want to provide it in both places.

In summary-focused work, this introduction should accomplish a few things:

- Introduce the name of the author whose work you are summarizing.
- Introduce the title of the text being summarized.
- Introduce where this text was presented (if it's an art installation, where is it being shown? If it's an article, where was that article published? Not all texts will have this component—for example, when summarizing a book written by one author, the title of the book and name of that author are sufficient information for your readers to easily locate the work you are summarizing).
- State the thesis.

Summary within Your Essay

You will probably find yourself more frequently using summary as just one component of work with a wide range of goals (not just a goal to “summarize X”).

Summary introductions in these situations still generally need to:

- Name the author.
- Name the text being summarized.
- State just the relevant context, if there is any (maybe the author has a specific credential that makes their work on this topic carry more weight than it would otherwise, or maybe the study they generated is now being used as a benchmark for additional research).
- Introduce the author's full name (first and last names) the first time you summarize part of their text. If you summarize pieces of the same text more than once in a work you are writing, each time you use their text after that initial introduction of the source, you will only use the author's last name as you introduce that next summary component.

Presenting the Body of a Summary

Again, this will look a little different depending on the purpose of the summary work you are doing. Regardless of how you are using summary, you will introduce the main ideas throughout your text with transitional phrasing, such as “One of [Author's] biggest points is...,” or “[Author's] primary concern about this solution is...”

If you are responding to a “write a summary of X” assignment, the body of that summary will expand on

the main ideas you stated in the introduction of the summary, although this will all still be very condensed compared to the original. What are the key points the author makes about each of those big-picture main ideas? Depending on the kind of text you are summarizing, you may want to note how the main ideas are supported (although, again, be careful to avoid making your own opinion about those supporting sources known).

When you are summarizing with an end goal that is broader than just summary, the body of your summary will still present the idea from the original text that is relevant to the point you are making (condensed and in your own words).

Since it is much more common to summarize just a single idea or point from a text in this type of summarizing (rather than all of its main points), it is important to make sure you understand the larger points of the original text. For example, you might find that an article provides an example that opposes its main point in order to demonstrate the range of conversations happening on the topic it covers. This opposing point, though, isn't the main point of the article, so just summarizing this one opposing example would not be an accurate representation of the ideas and points in that text.

Concluding a Summary

If the author has a clear conclusion, use that. Otherwise, this is also a good place to state (or restate) the things that are most important for your readers to remember after reading your summary.

When your writing has a primary goal other than summary—such as response, analysis, or compare/contrast sources—your conclusion should:

- Include an in-text citation, if appropriate. (To learn how to do this correctly, refer to the [Library's APA Citation Guide](#) or the [APA chapter in *Communication Essentials for College*](#).)
- Discuss the summary you've just presented. How does it support, illustrate, or give new information about the point you are making in your writing? Connect it to your own main point for that paragraph so readers understand clearly why it deserves the space it takes up in your work. (Note that this is still not giving your opinion on the material you've summarized, just making connections between it and your own main points.)

Check Your Understanding: Writing a Summary Paragraph

Write a summary paragraph for a reading you are assigned. A summary is an effective restatement focusing on the main idea of a writing passage.

Requirements

- Your topic sentence should provide the author and title along with the thesis of the work.
- Only mention key points that support the thesis.
- Keep the same order or sequence of information.
- Mention only information from the original writing. Do not include new information, personal opinions, or interpretations.
- Include a fair distribution of summary statement, paraphrase, and quote.
- Your assignment must be formatted in correct APA Formatting.

Step-by Step Instructions

Follow these steps carefully.

1. Read through once, not taking notes or highlighting, but simply noting the overall main idea of the text.
2. Re-read with pen in hand. Make note of key words and ideas—highlight, underline, or circle them.
 - A. Divide the text into sections that focus on one key idea in each section.
 - B. Note a key term for each section.
 - C. Plan which sections best suit summary statement, paraphrase, and quote.
3. Write an outline: your topic sentence and a list of the points that support the main idea.
4. Write a sentence for each point. Conclude with a sentence showing the significance of the writing from the author's point of view, not yours. (If the author makes a clear conclusion, skip writing a conclusion of your own.)
5. Make sure to use correct APA formatting. Run the spelling and grammar check and follow the revision process before submitting your final assignment.

Don't forget to ask for help if you need it!

Attribution & References

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PARAPHRASING

When you quote a source, you are taking the words directly from the passage: these are the original author's words. Quotes can be useful, but in order to show you understand what you have read, you should paraphrase. **Paraphrasing** is putting information into your words; it is an important skill to develop because when you do it, you are not only showing you understand what you have read, but you are also processing and adapting that information to your writing purpose.

When you paraphrase, you are using the **technique** of putting a condensed version of someone else's ideas (summary) into **your own words**.

It is very important to remember that when you paraphrase you still need to include citations because although the words are yours, the ideas belong to the original authors, and you must give that person credit for the ideas.

Tip

If you prefer rewriting, try not to copy but use your own paraphrasing of the material. If a concept is difficult, put it in your own terms with a concrete example so you understand it. Try to put it in the vocabulary of the course.

Paraphrasing Sources

When you paraphrase material from a source, restate the information from an entire sentence or passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them. Again, it is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing; that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources. A true paraphrase restates ideas using the writer's (your) own language and style.

In his draft, Jorge frequently paraphrased details from sources. At times, he needed to rewrite a sentence more than once to ensure he was paraphrasing ideas correctly. Below is a passage with examples of how he paraphrased and adapted the information to create his own paragraph. Read the passage from a website. Then read Jorge's initial attempt at paraphrasing it, followed by the final version of his paraphrase.

Source

According to Heinz (2009), dieters nearly always get great results soon after they begin following a low-carbohydrate diet, but these results tend to taper off after the first few months, particularly because many dieters find it difficult to follow a low-carbohydrate diet plan consistently.

Jorge's Original Paraphrase

People usually see encouraging outcomes shortly after they go on a low-carbohydrate diet, but their progress slows down after a short while, especially because most discover that it is a challenge to adhere to the diet strictly (Heinz, 2009).

After reviewing the paraphrased sentence, Jorge realized he was following the original source too closely. He did not want to quote the full passage verbatim, so he again attempted to restate the idea in his own style.

Jorge's Revised Paraphrase

Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short lived (Heinz, 2009).

Check Your Understanding: Paraphrasing I

Paraphrasing – A (Text Version)

Paraphrase the following passage in your own words:

“The twenties were the years when drinking was against the law, and the law was a bad joke because everyone knew of a local bar where liquor could be had. They were the years when organized crime ruled the cities, and the police seemed powerless to do anything against it. Classical music was forgotten while jazz spread throughout the land, and men like Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie became the heroes of the young. The flapper was born in the twenties, and with her bobbed hair and short skirts, she symbolized, perhaps more than anyone or anything else, America’s break with the past” (Yancey, 1989, p. 25).

Paraphrasing – B (Text Version)

Paraphrase the following passage in your own words:

“While the Sears Tower is arguably the greatest achievement in skyscraper engineering so far, it’s unlikely that architects and engineers have abandoned the quest for the world’s tallest building. The question is: Just how high can a building go? Structural engineer William LeMessurier has designed a skyscraper nearly one half mile high, twice as tall as the Sears Tower. And architect Robert Sobel claims that existing technology could produce a 500-story building” (Bachman, 1990, p. 15).

Activity source: “3.7 Paraphrase (a& b)” Brenna Clarke Gray (H5P Adaptation) is based on content from [Writing for Success – 1st Canadian Edition](#) by Tara Harkoff, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). / Converted to text version.

Check Your Understanding: Paraphrasing II

Paraphrasing II (Text Version)

Write Your Paraphrase

- Choose an important idea or detail from your notes—for any class you like, or any research you have in process!—and jot it down here in point form.
- Restate the idea in your own words as completely as possible. Do not look it up in your notes first!
- Find the original text in the source. Now, compare your paraphrase. Do you capture the idea accurately? Is your language and sentence structure original to you? Revise and make any necessary changes here—and don’t forget to add your citation!

Activity source: “3.8 Original Paraphrase” by Brenna Clarke Gray (H5P Adaptation) is based on content from [Writing for Success – 1st Canadian Edition](#) by Tara Harkoff, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). / Converted to text version.

Check Your Understanding: Summary (Assignment 2)

Please follow the instructions to complete Assignment 2. Once finished, you will be able to print your completed assignment for submission.

Summary-Assignment 2 (Text Version)

Assignment Preparation

Read the following article and compose a summary of 100 to 150 words. Determine what the key points are and paraphrase accordingly. Make sure all the points you choose are important to the understanding and overall meaning of the essay.

Remember:

- You want to use objective language that accurately represents the original author's angle of vision: do not provide analysis or discussion.
- You should not simply substitute words.
- You should change up the sentence structure.
- The end result needs to capture all the main points but also be in your own words.

Heroin as One of the Most Lethal Drugs

Among prohibited narcotic substances, heroin has been classified as one of the most addictive and detrimental. In a recent research study run by the Institute of Narcotic Examination in Rollesque, Nevada, heroin ranked 2.89 out of 3 on a dependence rating scale (Perez, 2012). This result was also confirmed by scores of research held in London by the Academy of Pharmaceutical Studies (Perez, 2012). An opiate processed from morphine, heroin is delineated as a lethal drug. The common form of heroin sold in streets looks like a white or brown gummy substance with a high consistency of tar.

Heroin is injected into the human body through a hypothermic needle directly in a muscle or a particular blood vein. It can also be smoked like cigarettes. There is the possibility of it being successfully mixed with drugs or snorted as cocaine. Street heroin is often mixed with other substances like sugar, starch, quinine, poisons or even powder milk to dilute the effect. Short and long term effects of heroin use have different levels of withdrawal, reinforcements, tolerance, dependency and intoxication. Heroin reduces pain and mimics the traits of endorphins, which causes the human brain to experience pleasure (Hollow, 2011). The

central neural system becomes supersaturated with endorphin like substances, and when the effect of heroin ends, individuals begin to feel the need for a new injection to prolong pleasure (Hollow, 2011).

The degree of heroin addictiveness can be measured by the severe withdrawal symptoms which it induces in individuals. Among the most common symptoms, one can enlist the following: a warm flush feeling in the skin, an ill mood and depression, vomiting, itching, nausea, and heavy pain in joints. The cardiac functions and the neural system functions slow down, though it often depends on the individual's genetic type, amount of the drug taken, and the purity of the substance (Hollow, 2011).

Heroin addiction causes numerous side effects to the physical body. Blood vein structure collapses, and a risk of receiving a heart infection, liver disease, or abscesses dramatically increases. Long term addiction to the drug takes the form of a chronic, relapsing disease. Long term use of heroin prompts users to gradually increase doses. Once a user is in the chronic stage, this implies such symptoms as restlessness, bone and muscle pain, insomnia, and intense withdrawal stages lasting for 24 to 48 hours after heroin has been taken (Lichter, 2012).

The treatment of heroin addiction includes a thorough detoxification program, which helps to minimize the severity of withdrawal symptoms. The use of medications for treatment along with therapy helps individuals cope. Methadone programs, buprenorphine, together with behavioral therapies aid to recover from addiction (Perez, 2012). These aspects are important, as both behavioral and pharmacological interventions can effectively normalize addiction levels, brain functions and social behavior. These methods are used in a varied combination to cure the withdrawal, tolerance, dependence and intoxication elements to minimize the addictive qualities of heroin.

References

Hollow, M. (2011). *Heroin: The Ultimate Drug*. Chicago: Running Hill Books.

Lichter, M. (2012). *The Dark Hole of Heroin*. Boston: Sidetrack Books.

Perez, G. (2012). *Studies of Heroin*. New York: Gold Beard Press.

Essay taken and adapted from: <http://academichelp.net/samples/essays/expository/heroin-lethal-drug.html>

Reviewing the Criteria

Remember that your summary should meet the following criteria:

- 100-150 words.
- Includes all key points from the original article.
- Demonstrates good use of your own vocabulary and sentence structure.
- Uses objective language (reporting on the content, not analyzing it).

For each of the criteria listed here, click the Add Criteria button and explain how you will meet the requirements for this assignment.

Drafting Your Summary

- Make your first attempt at drafting your summary. Ensure you have covered all of the key points, but work towards a word count goal of 100-150 words.
- Now, go back one page and review the text of the original article. Have you missed any key details? Have you accidentally borrowed any words, phrases, or sentence structure? Revise your summary.

Reviewing Criteria

Reflect on each of the parts of your assignment as laid out in the criteria.

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Converted to text version.

Paraphrasing is another way of presenting ideas from source material in your own words, but without the condensing that happens in a summary. Instead, paraphrases stay approximately the same length as the original source material being paraphrased.

Why Paraphrase?

To Demonstrate Understanding

Paraphrasing can demonstrate your understanding of a text, including its more complex details and connections between its main points, and can also help you double-check the depth of your understanding of a text.

To Provide Support

You might paraphrase a section from a source (unlike summary, it is unlikely that you will ever need to paraphrase an entire source) when an idea or point in that source is important to an assignment you are working on and you feel it needs to be included, but you can rephrase it in a way that fits your work without losing any key information.

Tip

Use paraphrase instead of direct quote unless you have compelling reasons to preserve the exact language of the original text. Often, the reason to preserve the original text in a direct quote is because that text uses specialized language that you can't easily rephrase. As much of your work as possible should be in your own voice.

Look at the last paragraph of the *Scientific American* article, "[Are you a Magnet for Mosquitoes? \[New Tab\]](#)" about why mosquitoes are more attracted to some humans than others.

The following sentence would be a good candidate for a direct quote because you might not know how to paraphrase the part about MHC genes:

“Scientists that study human odors and genetics have previously suggested scent cues associated with genetics are likely controlled via the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) genes” (Maron, 2017, para. 8).

The sentence that follows, though, says this:

“Those genes appear to play a role in odor production and also in mammals’ mating choices—because humans and mice alike appear to prefer mates that smell less similar to themselves, which scientists have theorized may be a natural control against inbreeding” (Maron, 2017, para. 8).

Since there isn't particularly specialized or original language in here that must be preserved, this second sentence is a good candidate for paraphrasing. One way might look like this:

These same genes that might be attracting mosquitoes more to some of us than to others could also be helping us choose partners that we aren't likely to be related to (Maron, 2017).

What Makes Something a Paraphrase?

A paraphrase

- Is in your own words.
- Is not condensed.
- Avoids personal opinion.
- Is completely rephrased from the original.

WARNING: don't "thesaurize" a paraphrase. This means, don't take a thesaurus and find a replacement for the words in the text one by one. This is NOT writing in your own words, and it puts

you at risk for plagiarism. It will also sound ridiculous.

Like summary, a paraphrase is someone else's ideas rewritten in your own words. Unlike summary, though, paraphrase should not be condensed—the ideas as you write them should take up about the same amount of space as they do in the original text. A paraphrase should not include your own opinions about the topic, what the author of the text is saying about it, or how that author is presenting their point.

It can be easy, when writing a paraphrase, to rely on some of the original author's phrasing or direct synonyms for the author's original words. Remember that a paraphrase must be entirely your own writing, not just phrases or words substituted in the same sentence structure, length, etc. used by the original text.

Write paraphrases in sentence structures that are natural to you and true to your own writing voice. The only job of a paraphrase is to accurately and completely represent the relevant idea presented in the text you are paraphrasing.

How Should I Organize a Paraphrase?

It is not likely that you will encounter an assignment that solely requires you to paraphrase a text. Instead, you will use paraphrase to support your own points and ideas in work with a wide range of goals. That said, there are still some guidelines for incorporating paraphrase into your work:

- Introduce the author and original text, just as you would for a summary.
- If there is relevant context, mention that as well.
- Then, restate the part of the original text that you want to use *into your own original language and sentence structures*.
- Include a parenthetical citation (if appropriate) at the end of the paraphrased material.
- After delivering and citing the paraphrased material, reconnect that information to your own topic and point.

Check Your Understanding: Paraphrasing III

Here is a brief passage from Sarah Boxer's article in *The Atlantic*, "[An Artist for the Instagram Age](#)":

“The fact that some folks have managed to make the scene while others get left out in the cold is integral to the excitement of participatory art. The thrill is akin to exotic travel, or getting to see *Hamilton*. Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs” (Boxer, 2017, para. 7).

Which of the following is an appropriate paraphrase of this passage? Why is that one strong and the other one less functional as a paraphrase?

1. The truth that many people have been able to attend these events as others have been shut out of them is key to what makes this kind of art appealing. The excitement is similar to visiting foreign countries or attending a showing of a sold-out musical. Since some people who wish to attend can't do so, these art forms, despite not necessarily wanting to, often end up denying access to many would-be attendees.
2. Boxer notes that this kind of art only maintains its appeal as long as there are more people clamoring to view it than can possibly actually view it. This reliance on scarcity means these artists are ultimately relying on elitist principles to find their success and remain in demand.

Attribution & References

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- “[3.3 Paraphrasing](#)” In *Writing for Success – 1st Canadian Edition* by Tara Harkoff & [author removed] licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

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DEVELOPING ESSAY OUTLINES

Introduction

Creating a well-structured and persuasive essay involves traversing three pivotal stages: preparation, writing, and revision. In this chapter, you will discover the art of formulating a compelling introduction that sets the stage for your argument, adding substantial evidence in the main body, and summarizing your points in your conclusion. You will also explore the importance of having a well-constructed outline to use as your guide when writing your first draft.

Additionally, you will continue to learn about intellectual property, empowering you to make informed decisions and navigate the ethical considerations surrounding citation and the proper utilization of external sources. In this journey, you will begin to understand the purpose and embrace the process of using a systematic application of citation conventions contributing to the robustness and reliability of your own work.

These techniques and processes will prepare you with the methods and technologies commonly employed for research and communication across diverse fields. By embracing these tools, you will unlock new avenues for information gathering, analysis, and collaboration, empowering your scholarly pursuits with efficiency and precision.

Learning Objectives

- Inquire about the research process to create a comprehensive plan.
- Understand how body paragraphs serve a thesis.
- Identify when and how to summarize, paraphrase, and directly quote information from research sources.
- Apply citation conventions systematically.
- Apply critical thinking skills, pattern analysis, and synthesize ideas to compose texts in a reflective way.

To Do List

- Watch the video on How to Write an Essay: Four Minute Step by Step Guide.
- Read “Integrating Sources” in *Critical Reading, Critical Writing*
- Read “Research Guide” in *Writing Guide with Handbook*.
- Read “Creating a Rough Draft Four a Research Paper” in *Communications Essentials for College*.

- Read “Annotated Student Sample: Research Log in *Writing Guide with Handbook*.”
- Complete Essay Outline Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY: 4 MINUTE STEP BY STEP GUIDE

Watch It: How to Write an Essay

[Watch How to write an essay: 4 minute step-by step-guide | Scribbr \(4 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

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USING SOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR WRITING

Using Sources to Serve Academic Argument

At some point in your academic career, you will be asked to move beyond merely reporting on the findings of sources, as you would in a bibliography, and instead to use what you have learned from sources to participate meaningfully and responsibly in an academic conversation. This may be a literal conversation or one that takes place in writing as writers read and respond to one another.

All academic writers must show how what they know or what they claim connects with prior information or knowledge. This is true even when these scholars are presenting a new study or their own new findings. Sometimes, academic writers contribute to what we know or understand about a subject by presenting their own position, or argument, in an ongoing debate. At these times, they must use perspectives and information from others to support or provide evidence for that position. This is a skill that you will practice as a composition student.

Finding credible, relevant sources is only one part of the research process; effectively integrating those sources in the arrangement of an academic or argumentative essay is a different task requiring further close reading and critical thinking. This chapter highlights three skills of academic writers when they work with sources:

1. Considering the different roles that sources can play in your argument;
2. Synthesizing, or connecting information from multiple sources in unique ways;
3. Providing context for your reader about each source and how it fits into your argument.

Roles that Sources Can Play

Good Research is a Process that Starts with Inquiry

Good research starts with a question; you have an idea about something, and you want to learn more. Academic research is a specific type that involves finding and reading sources to prepare to participate in an academic conversation. This requires you to keep three elements in your mind and to stay aware of how they are changing, and how they are changing each other, as you learn more (figure 1):

1. your central research topic or question
2. your knowledge or understanding about the topic
3. your working main claim or position about the topic (working thesis)

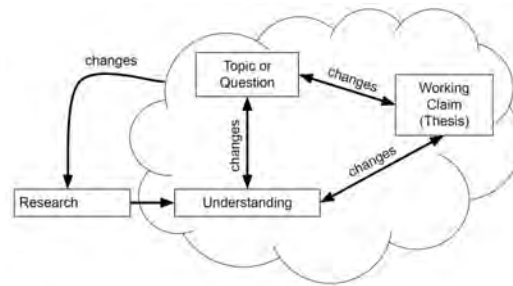


Figure 1: Research Process Flowchart

To evaluate whether a source is relevant for your purpose, you should not just try to decide whether it “fits” or relates to what you already know or believe. In fact, that source’s perspective may change what you believe. Or it may change your entire question or topic itself, as you learn about specific issues, conversations, and debates related to the question that you started with.

Example of Research as a Recursive Process

Imagine you start with a broad research question: “Are the graduation rates really so low for college students in the United States?” After some preliminary research, you learn that, yes, there are some statistics that highlight a problem of students starting but not finishing college.

So, you narrow your research question to learn more: “What factors contribute to students’ struggles with completing college?” And you start to see that there is an ongoing conversation about students from under-served populations: low-income students and first-generation students in particular.

So, given all your findings, you write a working thesis that might sound like this:

The promise of college as a gateway to increased financial earnings or lifelong success for its attendees isn’t panning out; more needs to be done to address completion rates for college graduates—especially among under-served populations, including students from low-income households.

Remember: your initial topic was graduation rates, and that shifted to a topic about why students struggle to finish college. While you are researching, keep in mind that the many ongoing conversations about higher

education might not immediately “match” or sound just like your own search terms or topic. So, skimming articles and texts about your overarching topic—college—can still be valuable. Look at the article, [“Is a tuition-free policy enough to ensure college success?”](#) [New Tab] in figure 2 and note the title: it seems to be asking about the possible effects of free college tuition. It doesn’t look like it will “answer” your research question, but it can still prove useful.

As you skim this source, you find that, as the title implies, these authors argue that making college free is not “enough to ensure college success” because low-income students face more complex struggles than just the difficulty of affording college. So, even though your working thesis does not directly relate to the main claim or thesis of this article, it contains relevant perspectives and evidence about your topic.



Figure 2: Example Source #1 that Widens the Conversation. **Source:** Screenshot of article featured in [The Conversation](#), licensed under [CC BY-ND](#).

Similarly, if your working question or topic is why low-income students struggle in college, then the [Postsecondary Pathways out of poverty: City University of New York accelerated study in associate programs and the case for national policy](#) article in figure 3 may not seem to answer your question directly. Instead, it appears to be about why a New York college’s “accelerated” associate degree programs should be used as a good model for making a policy for the whole nation. But, if these authors are arguing that their college has made a successful “pathway out of poverty,” then maybe part of their article first describes the problem that you are researching (low-income student struggles) before arguing for their specific solution.

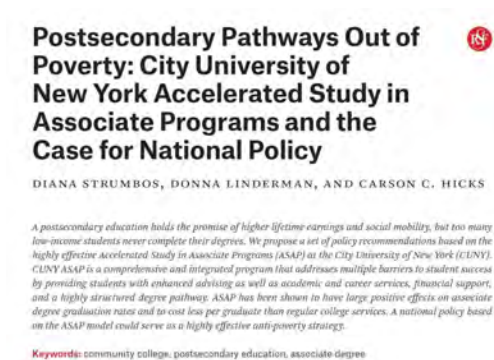


Figure 3: Example Source #2 that Broadens the Conversation. **Source:** Screenshot of article in [RSF journal](#), licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 3.0](#).

After reading these and other sources, you should revisit and revise your working claim or thesis statement to reflect all that you have learned and the likely position that you will take in your argument. Note the changes between this one and the previous example:

Because low-income students do not complete college at the same rate as their peers due to several “hidden” barriers, American community colleges should redesign the ways in which they educate and support students from low-income households in order to meet the goal of putting those students on the path to increased financial earnings and lifelong stability.

Rereading Sources with their Roles in Mind

Once you have reached the step of preparing to “join the conversation” with your own writing, review how all of the perspectives and information you have gathered relate or “speak to” your working thesis statement. How will you organize and present all that you have learned to your reader to persuade them effectively?

You are already familiar with the idea of a text appealing to readers by providing logical reasons, conveying credibility, and evoking an emotional response. So you can think of the perspectives and information from your sources as tools that strengthen these rhetorical appeals of your argument. But sources can serve in more specific ways, too.

Sources often provide evidence to support the claims within your argument. There are different kinds of evidence that are persuasive in different ways:

- **Numerical data** and statistics such as the results of scientific studies or surveys
- **Expert testimony**: the views and ideas of experts who support your claims
- **Stories and anecdotes**: specific examples that illustrate the real human experience of your topic and elicit emotion
- **Counterarguments**: opposing viewpoints or ideas that otherwise challenge your claims, which you will refute or answer

Also, some sources may include background information that you must provide as a writer so that your reader is adequately informed about your topic. This may include:

- The **scope** or scale of your topic (where your topic is relevant and how widespread it is)
- **Definitions** of terms or explanations of unfamiliar concepts that are important to your argument
- The **history** of events that your reader must understand for a full understanding of why the topic exists in its present form
- Information that shows the **timeliness** or relevance of the issue (*kairos*) and why it is important right now

With all of your research available, it may help to check for gaps in your supporting evidence using a chart like the one in table 1.

Table 1: Roles of a Source (Example 1 – [Page and Kehoe \(2016\)](#))

Type of source	Examples
Background/ Kairos	Section 1: rates of enrollment increasing, but graduation rates low Section 3: discussion about need for support that goes beyond financial assistance and discussion about what kind of support helps
Numerical data and statistics	Section 1: statistics about college attendance + also “only three in five completed their bachelor’s degree within six years” (para. 2) + contrast between students from high-income families who completed (3/4) and students from low-income families (under half) Section 3: statistics about success in one program “61-75%” Section 4: increase in AA degree from 18-33%
Expert testimonies	Section 3: quote attributed to Dell Scholars program, students need “ongoing support and assistance to address all of the emotional, lifestyle, and financial challenges that may prevent scholars from completing college” (para. 20). Section 4: Levin and Garcia explain cost/value of program
Stories and anecdotes	Section 2: Story about “Veronica” and her needs for childcare and additional financial guidance Story about “Marcus” as a full-time student and also supporting a family
Counterarguments	Last 2 paragraphs address problem of “free tuition” as a solution to completion rates; possible counterargument to explore?

This kind of graphic organizer lets you “see” how your research will (or will not) help you start to build and support your argument.

A successful academic argument will draw from multiple sources in a variety of ways. So to help you create your graphic organizer—and start outlining your argumentative body paragraphs—it’s important that you review your sources strategically to start seeing how they will serve you as a writer. Let’s take a look at an article we’ve used in some of our model paragraphs (in the next section of this chapter).

This is an article called, “Feet on Campus, Heart at Home: First-Generation College Students Struggle with Divided Identities,” and it’s written by Linda Banks-Santilli, a college professor. In our research, we were focusing on the struggles faced by students from low-income families, but Banks-Santilli notes that around 50 percent of first-generation students are low-income students, so this article seems relevant to our argument as

well. When we reread Banks-Santilli, keeping the different roles sources can play in mind, we can add to our graphic organizer (Table 2):

Table 2: Roles of a Source (Example 2 – [Banks-Santilli \(2015\)](#))

Type of Source	Examples
Background/ Kairos	Defines first-gen students, could use this in a separate paragraph about this population or explain that “About 50% of all FG students in the US are low-income” (para. 5).
Numerical data and statistics	
Expert testimonies	
Stories and anecdotes	Section 3 – last paragraph: one student’s experience moving away to college and still helping parents with household finances
Counterarguments	

It’s clear that this source, Banks-Santilli, doesn’t “serve” many parts of our thesis. This is because the focus of the article isn’t aligned with the focus of our argument. That doesn’t mean it isn’t a useful source in the creation and composition of our argument.

In fact, if you fill out a graphic organizer with all of your sources, you will be able to “see” quite a bit about what you have and what you need to make and support your argument. You will notice if there is an obvious lack of evidence, for instance, or a lack of counterarguments. You will probably not use everything you note in your graphic organizer in your actual essay, but the act of rereading sources critically to note how they can serve your argument will help you.

How Body Paragraphs Serve a Thesis

Students are sometimes intimidated by the prospect of a 6, 7, or even 10-page assignment. They can’t imagine they’ll have enough to say to fill that length. One way that may help tackle such a task is to consider a shift in your thinking: you’re no longer the researcher, you’re now the messenger, writing your own argument that explains and develops your thesis.

If we break down the thesis statement above we can see that there are several points to explain, claims to prove, and ideas to develop (Table 3), and these different parts will likely become different sections of your essay.

Table 3: Sample Implications of a Thesis Statement

Excerpt from thesis statement	Implications for body paragraphs
Because low-income students do not complete college at the same rate as their peers	First, this needs to be proven or demonstrated thoroughly to engage readers and prepare them for the rest of the argument.
due to several “hidden” barriers	The second half of this clause argues for the main cause of the problem—though it is not specified in detail—and this also needs to be explained and proven: what are the “hidden” barriers? What do readers need to know or understand regarding these obstacles to completion? What is the proof that these are the primary cause of the problem?
American community colleges should redesign the ways in which they educate and support students from low-income households in order to meet the goal of putting those students on the path to increased financial earnings and lifelong stability	<p>This thesis ends with a “proposal” section: a call for change. It may be more complicated to support this:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If we are calling for a redesign, we may first need to prove problems with the “old design.” So, the parts of college that are inhibiting completion must be presented and analyzed in some way. 2. The writer has to choose whether they will present specific solutions or changes and prove why they are the best ones, or just focus on proving the need for change in some meaningful way. <p>Note: this thesis specifies community colleges, so the essay will likely focus on two-year institutions at some point in the argument.</p>

Check Your Understanding: Identifying parts of your working thesis

In your own paper, you may want to identify different points or parts of your working thesis. If you take the time to do this, you will be able to start imagining the different parts or sections of your own paper:

- Do you mention a specific problem? Will you prove that problem? Give background information about it? Define terms? Explore and discuss the current status of the problem?

- Should you address multiple causes of that problem? Or do you intend to demonstrate the severity of that problem by discussing effects?
- Have you identified multiple populations affected by the issue that you are presenting?

Once you've clarified (for yourself) what, exactly, you will need to accomplish in your essay to support your argument, you may find it easier to start drafting paragraphs that address those separate points. In fact, it can be most effective to write a draft of your body paragraphs before revising your thesis statement and finally drafting your introduction and conclusion sections.

Synthesis of Multiple Sources

One way in which academic writers create knowledge or make progress in the discussion or exploration of a topic is by juxtaposing or combining the ideas and perspectives from multiple sources, or **synthesizing**, in new ways.

When you write a summary, rhetorical analysis, or annotated bibliography, you are reporting on a single source at a time. Synthesis asks you to do more. Through research, you have reached a deeper understanding of the different perspectives or parts of your topic by reading multiple sources and finding connections between them. The goal of synthesis is to now try to help your reader to reach that same understanding. So synthesis is both the invisible act of learning about different perspectives and messages and the very visible act of using multiple sources in the composition of your own, unique message.

Why Synthesize?

Synthesis in academic writing helps your reader to see the same connections between information in sources that you see, which in turn helps to persuade your reader to reach the same conclusion that you have from your research.

Furthermore, your argument will be more well-rounded and more well-developed when you use more than one source of support for each of your main claims. Also, because it is often dangerous to rely on a single source for information, incorporating multiple sources in support of a claim or idea helps to ensure that your information is accurate to you and your reader.

Usually it is not considered productive for an academic writer to repeat, summarize, or paraphrase a large passage or many ideas from a single source. Not only does this fail to further the discussion of a topic beyond what has already been said by others, but it may also pose problems of academic integrity, since academic ethics require a writer to produce original work and provide attribution for ideas that are not their own.

Examples of Synthesis in a Sample Essay

A paragraph like the one below would appear earlier in the essay to provide background information as well as context, before the writer starts to “prove” the thesis. This is a meaningful way to engage readers and prepare them for the rest of the argument.

In this paragraph, the writer uses three sources to present the scope of the problem (essentially, the background information about the issue and some context about current data or ongoing discussions before highlighting the specific population of individuals that the thesis statement will address (students from low-income households). First, read the paragraph, then review Table 4 for annotations on how these sources are working together.

Students are not completing the college degrees they set out to achieve. The number of students attending college has increased over time; “In 1950, only 16 percent of young people had at least some college exposure. By 2012, this figure rose to 63 percent” (Page & Kehoe, 2016, para. 1). However, the rate of students graduating is just too low. According to NPR Education reporter Elissa Nadworny, “just 58 percent of students who started college in the fall of 2012 had earned any degree six years later” (Nadworny, 2019, para. 2). Nadworny (2019) is citing the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center for this information in her article written in 2019. Among community college students, this number is even lower: below forty percent (Nadworny, 2019). The promise of college as a way ahead is especially troubling for students who don’t come from a place of privilege. Statistics show that low-income students do not complete at the rate that high-income students do (Page & Kehoe, 2019; Favero, 2018). In fact, researchers from the City University of New York published an article about an accelerated associate degree program aimed at helping increase graduation rates (Strumbos et al., 2018). They discuss the fact that college as a stepping stone or a way to advance students’ economic mobility becomes increasingly problematic when we recognize that students from low-income households are “six times less likely to have earned a bachelor’s degree by the age of twenty-five than those from high-income families” (Strumbos et al., 2018, p. 102). Page and Kehoe (2019) note that this is especially troubling since the “gaps in degree attainment” have been increasing (para. 3). Clearly this issue isn’t getting better on its own.

Table 4: Synthesis of Sources

excerpt from the paragraph	function of the the source(s)
<p>The number of students attending college has increased over time; “In 1950, only 16 percent of young people had at least some college exposure. By 2012, this figure rose to 63 percent” (Page & Kehoe, 2019, para 1). However, the rate of students graduating is just too low. According to NPR Education reporter Elissa Nadworny (2019), “just 58 percent of students who started college in the fall of 2012 had earned any degree six years later” (para. 2).</p>	<p>One source shows the wider context of the total number of students attending college, and then other sources show the percentages of those students who actually graduate.</p>
<p>According to NPR Education reporter Elissa Nadworny (2019), “just 58 percent of students who started college in the fall of 2012 had earned any degree six years later” (para. 2). Nadworny is citing the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center for this information in her article written in 2019. Among community college students, this number is even lower: below forty percent (Nadworny, 2019)</p>	<p>The writer puts their topic in context by moving from general to specific. One source states the completion rates for American college students and then community college students.</p>
<p>They discuss the fact that college as a stepping stone or a way to advance students’ economic mobility becomes increasingly problematic when we recognize that students from low-income households are “six times less likely to have earned a bachelor’s degree by the age of twenty-five than those from high-income families” (Strumbos et al., 2018, p. 102).</p>	<p>Then, another source focuses more specifically on completion rates for low-income students.</p>
<p>Page and Kehoe (2019) note that this is especially troubling since the “gaps in degree attainment” have been increasing (para. 3).</p>	<p>This source claims that there is a trend, or consistent change over time. Proving that there is a growing problem shows the current relevance or timeliness (kairos) of the topic.</p>

A paragraph like the one below would serve as a body paragraph presenting one claim that supports our working thesis. This paragraph tries to engage readers logically, supporting its claim with evidence from sources. The first sentence acts as a **topic sentence** (a helpful indicator about the paragraph’s main claim). The writer then uses information from two sources to prove this claim. First, read the paragraph, then review Table 5 for annotations on how these sources are working together.

A major reason why low-income students do not earn degrees at the same rates as their peers is that they are more likely to face obstacles in their personal lives that may slow or delay their college progress. In their 2018 study, Strumbos et al. report that if a student does not complete twenty credits per year, they are not likely to complete their degree. Unfortunately, this “degree momentum” is often difficult for low-income students to achieve due to what Nathan Favero (2018), a professor of public policy at American University, calls “personal barriers to success.” For

example, Favero notes that low-income students may be single parents who lack support from other family members, and so they “can feel a strong pull to pause their studies and start working” (Favero, 2018, para. 7) when unexpected bills arise. Diana Strumbos and her colleagues agree that “Work and family obligations sometimes force students to attend part time, which can again lead to a loss of momentum and decrease their likelihood of graduating” (Strumbos et al., 2018, p. 102). Therefore, typical degree programs and schedules often do not serve low-income students.

Table 5: Synthesis of Sources Example #2

excerpt from the paragraph	function of the the source(s)
if a student does not complete twenty credits per year, they are not likely to complete their degree.	The first source presents data to provide evidence (in this case, of the claim that pace of credits correlates with completion)
Unfortunately, this “degree momentum” is often difficult for low-income students to achieve due to what Nathan Favero, a professor of public policy at American University, calls “personal barriers to success.”	A different source is used here in order to show that multiple sources corroborate the claim. (Multiple experts have reached the same conclusion about a major cause of the problem.)
Favero notes that low-income students may be single parents who lack support from other family members, and so they “can feel a strong pull to pause their studies and start working” when unexpected bills arise.	The purpose of this evidence is to present an expert’s testimony or viewpoint. This expert view draws a conclusion or inference from the previously presented data, and it confirms the writer’s claim.
Diana Strumbos and her colleagues agree that “Work and family obligations sometimes force students to attend part time, which can again lead to a loss of momentum and decrease their likelihood of graduating.”	This source presents an expert view that affirms the main claim: the link between the cause (personal barriers) and the effect (loss of degree momentum).
Therefore, typical degree programs and schedules often do not serve low-income students.	The closing sentence reaches a new conclusion about the claim based on the evidence that has been presented. (In this example, because some students’ “personal barriers” are a cause of the problem, changes to “typical degree programs” may be part of the solution.)

A paragraph like the one below would serve as a later body paragraph. This paragraph tries to engage the reader emotionally. After the writer has proven their claims about major causes of the issue by citing data that was reported by credible sources, the writer presents individual examples in narrative form—*anecdotal evidence*—to illustrate the quality or nature of the issue. First, read the paragraph, then review Table 6 for annotations on how these sources are working together.

It may be easy to overlook the role that a family plays in either supporting a student or creating additional burdens for them while at college. While time, money, and knowledge may flow from an affluent family to a student, for a low-income student it may be the other way around. For example, Linda Banks-Santilli, an Associate Professor of Education, explains how some first-generation students may feel as though they're leaving their families behind or abandoning them. One student moved to live on campus, but she was concerned about her parents, who didn't own or use computers, so she "divided her time," Banks-Santilli notes, between her own coursework and paying her family's bills (Banks-Santilli, 2015, para. 19). Page and Kehoe (2016) describe a similar situation when they introduce Marcus, a student who had "transitioned successfully to college but retained responsibility for supporting his family financially. [...] Marcus stumbled academically, was placed on probation, and lost his financial aid" (para. 16). What Page and Kehoe (2016) demonstrate here is that playing the dual roles of student and family provider often proves too challenging to sustain.

Table 6: Synthesis of Sources Example #3

excerpt from the paragraph	function of the the source(s)
One student moved to live on campus, but she was concerned about her parents, who didn't own or use computers, so she "divided her time," Banks-Santilli notes, between her own coursework and paying her family's bills (Banks-Santilli, 2015, para. 19). Page and Kehoe (2016) describe a similar situation when they introduce Marcus, a student who had "transitioned successfully to college but retained responsibility for supporting his family financially (para. 16).	Use of different sources suggests that these example situations are widespread, present in multiple contexts, or observed by multiple experts.
"[...] Marcus stumbled academically, was placed on probation, and lost his financial aid" (para. 16).	Multiple examples prompt the reader to find similarities between them and infer a pattern or trend.
that playing the dual roles of student and family provider often proves too challenging to sustain.	A phrase following the evidence states the common pattern or trend presented by multiple examples ("dual roles") and states the claim that these examples support. The phrase reinforces the writer's original claim (the burden of family obligations on low-income college students).

Reviewing these annotations, you should see two things. First, that successful synthesis means that you have engaged in critical inquiry by drawing upon multiple texts and perspectives in order to form your own. Second, that the use of multiple sources can strengthen your argument by:

- showing how expert testimonies confirm data

- presenting common patterns or trends
- showing that an issue is present in multiple contexts

Check Your Understanding: Evaluating your paper draft, one paragraph at a time

Take an early draft of your paper and evaluate one paragraph at a time:

- How many sources have you cited in this paragraph?
- Do these sources “talk to each other”?
- What function(s) do these sources serve?
- Can you explain (to yourself) how each source has contributed to your overall message or perspective?

Putting Sources in Context

In general, you should refer to sources with your audience in mind. You should not expect your reader to infer the connection between your quotes, paraphrases, or summaries, and your claims. Nor should you simply drop quotes into your paragraphs without analyzing or discussing them in some way.

When revising a draft, you may find that you have dropped a quote into a paragraph with no introduction and then moved on without discussing the ideas of the quote at all. This is usually not helpful to academic readers. Or, you may find in your draft that you have repeated the phrase, “This quote says that...” or “This quote shows...” quite often. While this shows an effort to refer to quoted sources, it is not likely to help your reader to understand your sources or the specific ways in which they connect to your argument.

When you refer to a source in academic writing, you are taking it out of one context, where it was initially published, and transplanting it into another—your own writing, where it serves a specific purpose. Therefore, academic writers often include the most important information for their readers about:

1. the original context of the source itself, and
2. how the source information fits into their own argument

They often choose transitions that will best present this information in order to integrate source information into their writing.

Context of the Source Itself

When considering what your reader needs to know about the original context of source information, think about the five “w” questions (who, what, where, when, and why). Would explaining any of this information about the original source help your reader to understand the information and the role that it plays in your argument?

For example, in the body paragraph above, the writer writes:

Unfortunately, this “degree momentum” is often difficult for low-income students to achieve due to what Nathan Favero, **a professor of public policy at American University**, calls “personal barriers to success.”

This source serves the role of presenting an expert view agreeing with the writer’s claim, so the most relevant information about the source is who wrote it. Therefore, the paragraph introduces this evidence using a phrase that elaborates on the credentials of the author to show his expertise: “a professor of public policy at American University.” See table 7 for different ways to consider a source’s context.

Table 7: Context of a Source

Information about the source’s original context	Consider explaining this in your writing when you want to show...
Who wrote it?	the author’s experience or credentials in order to present expert testimony, or show the unique perspective or bias of the source.
What is the author’s main idea or thesis?	how the source’s focus is different from or similar to your own.
Where was the source originally published?	the credibility of a source related to a specific topic or audience, or the bias of a source.
Where geographically was the information in the source gathered?	information about a different location or cultural context than the one you are writing about.
When was the source published?	past information, trends over time, contrasting information from different times, or relevance of current information (kairos).
Why was the source written, or why was the study conducted?	how a source’s purpose is different from or similar to your own..
How did the author gather their information?	the significance or scope of numerical data or statistics, or how stories and anecdotes were gathered.

You have probably heard of instances of dishonesty that occur when writers present information “out of

context.” Sometimes, presenting source information without explaining its original purpose, audience, or context presents a false impression to your reader. In these cases, your writing may imply that a source agrees with, disagrees with, or relates to your claim when this is not the case.

Context of Your Argument

So how do you effectively integrate the words (quotes) and ideas (paraphrases) of your sources into your own argument?

First, keep in mind why you are quoting/paraphrasing a certain part of a certain source. Then, decide how you may need to refer to that source material in neighboring sentences in your own writing to help your reader to understand your intent and the role that this reference serves in your argument. Does the quote or paraphrase prove a claim that you have just made? Does it define or explain something that you are trying to make clear to readers? Does it provide an example or illustration of one of your claims? Does it elaborate on or introduce a different perspective about a previous point you have made?

Second, keeping your purpose for the quote or paraphrase in mind, choose the best transition words and phrases to show how the quote or paraphrase relates to the neighboring sentences and ideas.

- Transitions like *Similarly* or *Furthermore* will show that you are about to present more on a line of reasoning.
- Transitions like *However* or *On the other hand* will show that you are about to present a conflicting idea.
- Transitions like *Consequently*, *Therefore*, or *Because* will show cause and effect.

Third, choose the best **signal verb** to show how the source material relates to your neighboring sentences or ideas. These verbs, paired with the author of your source text, work much like transitional words and phrases.

If a reference is near the beginning of a paragraph or is the first reference to a source, you may choose a neutral verb:

- Favero (2018) *writes* that...
- Favero (2018) *explores* several factors that...
- Favero (2018) *states*/Favero (2018) *argues*

Later, you can connect source material to the ideas in your paragraph by using verbs that indicate how the source relates to neighboring ideas:

- show agreement (Favero (2018) *concur*s)
- disagreement (Favero (2018) *disput*es...)

You can also give readers an indication of what kind of information you will be presenting. Consider how these different verbs would fit with different types of quotations or paraphrases:

- Favero (2018) *lists*...
- Favero (2018) *claims*...
- Favero (2018) *emphasizes*...

Below, the sample body paragraph is shown, this time with key words highlighted to show how the writer integrates the source materials into the context of their own argument using transitions and signal verbs. Which highlighted words are most helpful to you as the reader, and what do they tell you about the writer's purpose for each quote or paraphrase?

A major reason why low-income students do not earn degrees at the same rates as their peers is that they are more likely to face obstacles in their personal lives that may slow or delay their college progress. In their 2018 study, Strumbos et al. **report** that if a student does not complete twenty credits per year, they are not likely to complete their degree. Unfortunately, this “degree momentum” is often difficult for low-income students to achieve due to what Nathan Favero (2018), a professor of public policy at American University, calls “personal barriers to success.” **For example**, Favero (2018) **notes** that low-income students may be single parents who lack support from other family members, and so they “can feel a strong pull to pause their studies and start working” (para. 7) when unexpected bills arise. Diana Strumbos and her colleagues **agree** that “Work and family obligations sometimes force students to attend part time, which can again lead to a loss of momentum and decrease their likelihood of graduating” (Strumbos et al., 2018, p. 102). **Therefore**, typical degree programs and schedules often do not serve low-income students.

Transitional phrases: for example, therefore

Signal phrases: Report, notes, agree

Check Your Understanding: Using Transition and Signal Phrases

Take a fully developed body paragraph and edit it for the use of transition phrases and signal phrases to show context:

1. Highlight all source material within the paragraph (quotes, paraphrases, and summaries)
2. Review these highlighted passages to see:
 - a. Have you addressed any of the five “w” questions for your sources? If not, is there anything more that your reader needs to understand about this source’s original context?
 - b. Have you included signal verbs for your quotes and/or paraphrases? Do you have a variety of appropriate words (for example *argues* vs. *believes* vs. *points out*)?
 - c. Have you used transitions to help show how sources’ ideas and your own ideas are related to each other?

Additional Resource: Roles of Sources Organizers

Download a copy of the [Roles of Sources Graphic Organizer \[PDF\]](#)

Roles of Sources Organizer (Text version)

Roles of Sources in Academic Argument Graphic Organizer

Area	What I know about this	Title of the source that provided this information	What I would still like to know about this
The past history of my topic			
The wider context (including surrounding laws, cultures and circumstances) related to my topic			
Definitions of key concepts related to my topic			
Most important numbers, numerical data, or statistics related to my topic			
Expert opinions or expert testimonies related to my topic			
Counter-arguments (views that disagree with mine) related to my topic			
specific stories about actual people (anecdotes) that are good examples of why my topic is important or relevant			

Activity source: “[Roles of Sources Graphical Organizer](#)” by Sarah Johnson and Jeremy O’Roark In *Critical Reading, Critical Writing*, is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA](#).

Attribution & References

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RESEARCH PROCESS: MAKING NOTES, SYNTHESIZING INFORMATION, AND KEEPING A RESEARCH LOG

As you conduct research, you will work with a range of “texts” in various forms, including sources and documents from online databases as well as images, audio, and video files from the Internet. You may also work with archival materials and with transcribed and analyzed primary data. Additionally, you will be taking notes and recording quotations from secondary sources as you find materials that shape your understanding of your topic and, at the same time, provide you with facts and perspectives. You also may download articles as PDFs that you then annotate. Like many other students, you may find it challenging to keep so much material organized, accessible, and easy to work with while you write a major research paper. As it does for many of those students, a research log for your ideas and sources will help you keep track of the scope, purpose, and possibilities of any research project.

A research log is essentially a journal in which you collect information, ask questions, and monitor the results. Even if you are completing the annotated bibliography for [Writing Process: Informing and Analyzing \[New Tab\]](#), keeping a research log is an effective organizational tool. Most entries have three parts: a part for notes on secondary sources, a part for connections to the thesis or main points, and a part for your own notes or questions. Record source notes by date and allow room to add cross-references to other entries.

Research Log

Before you create your outline for the research essay, you may want to create a research log similar to the student model. The research log will help you to keep track by recording all secondary source information such as your notes, complete publication data, relation to thesis, and other information as indicated in the right-hand column of the sample entry.

Another Lens: Customize the research log for your needs or preferences. You can apply [shading or colour coding \[New Tab\]](#) headers, rows, and/or columns in the three-column format. Or you can add columns to accommodate more information, analysis, synthesis, or commentary, formatting them as you wish. Consider adding a column for questions only or one for connections to other sources. Finally, consider a different [visual format \[New Tab\]](#), such as one without columns. Another possibility is to record some of your comments and questions so that you have an aural rather than a written record of these.

Review your assignment and customize your research log to fit the task.

Writing Centre

At this point, or at any other point during the research and writing process, you may find that your [school's writing centre](#) can provide extensive assistance. If you are unfamiliar with the writing centre, now is a good time to pay your first visit. Writing centres provide free peer tutoring for all types and phases of writing. Discussing your research with a trained writing centre tutor can help you clarify, analyze, and connect ideas as well as provide feedback on works in progress.

Quick Launch: Beginning Questions

You may begin your research log with some open pages in which you free write, exploring answers to the following questions. Although you generally would do this at the beginning, it is a process to which you likely will return as you find more information about your topic and as your focus changes, as it may during the course of your research.

- What information have I found so far?
- What do I still need to find?
- Where am I most likely to find it?

These are beginning questions. You will come across general questions or issues that a quick note or free write may help you resolve. The key to this section is to revisit it regularly. Written answers to these and other self-generated questions in your log clarify your tasks as you go along, helping you articulate ideas and examine supporting evidence critically. As you move further into the process, consider answering the following questions in your freewrite:

- What evidence looks as though it best supports my thesis?
- What evidence challenges my working thesis?
- How is my thesis changing from where it started?

Creating the Research Log

As you gather source material for your argumentative research paper, keep in mind that the research is intended to support original thinking. That is, you are not writing an informational report in which you simply supply facts to readers. Instead, you are writing to support a thesis that shows original thinking, and you are collecting and incorporating research into your paper to support that thinking. Therefore, a research

log, whether digital or handwritten, is a great way to keep track of your thinking as well as your notes and bibliographic information.

In the model below, the author records the correct MLA bibliographic citation for the source. Then, she records a note and includes the in-text citation here to avoid having to retrieve this information later. Perhaps most important, Tran records *why* she noted this information—how it supports her thesis: *The human race must turn to sustainable food systems that provide healthy diets with minimal environmental impact, starting now*. Finally, she makes a note to herself about an additional visual to include in the final paper to reinforce the point regarding the current pressure on food systems. And she connects the information to other information she finds, thus cross-referencing and establishing a possible synthesis. Use a format similar to that in Table 1 to begin your own research log.

Table 1: Model research log

Information	Connection to Thesis/Main Points	Notes/Cross-References/Synthesis
<p>Date: 6/06/2021</p> <p>It has been estimated, for example, that by 2050, milk production will increase 58 percent and meat production 73 percent (Chai, et al., 2019).</p>	<p>Shows the pressure being put on food systems that will cause the need for more sustainable systems</p>	<p>Maybe include a graph showing the rising pressure on food systems.</p> <p>Connects to similar predictions about produce and vegan diets. See Lynch et al.</p>
<p>Chai, B. C., van der Voort, J. R., Grofelnik, K., Eliasdottir, H. G., Klöss, I., Perez-Cueto, J. A. (2019). Which diet has the least environmental impact on our planet? A systematic review of vegan, vegetarian and omnivorous diets. <i>Sustainability</i>, 11(40), 4110. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11154110.</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>Source/Citation:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>Source/Citation:</p>		

Types of Research Notes

Taking good notes will make the research process easier by enabling you to locate and remember sources and use them effectively. While some research projects requiring only a few sources may seem easily tracked, research projects requiring more than a few sources are more effectively managed when you take good bibliographic and informational notes. As you gather evidence for your argumentative research paper, follow the descriptions and the electronic model to record your notes. You can combine these with your research log, or you can use the research log for secondary sources and your own note-taking system for primary sources if a division of this kind is helpful. Either way, be sure to include all necessary information.

Bibliographic Notes

These identify the source you are using. When you locate a useful source, record the information necessary to find that source again. It is important to do this as you find each source, even before taking notes from it. If you create bibliographic notes as you go along, then you can easily arrange them in alphabetical order later to prepare the reference list required at the end of formal academic papers. If your instructor requires you to use MLA formatting for your essay, be sure to record the following information:

1. Author
2. Title of source
3. Title of container (larger work in which source is included)
4. Other contributors
5. Version
6. Number
7. Publisher
8. Publication date
9. Location

When using MLA style with online sources, also record the following information:

10. Date of original publication
11. Date of access
12. URL
13. DOI (A DOI, or digital object identifier, is a series of digits and letters that leads to the location of an online source. Articles in journals are often assigned DOIs to ensure that the source can be located, even if the URL changes. If your source is listed with a DOI, use that instead of a URL.)

It is important to understand which documentation style your instructor will require you to use. Check the [Georgian Library Citation Guide](#) for more details on APA.

Informational Notes

These notes record the relevant information found in your sources. When writing your essay, you will work from these notes, so be sure they contain all the information you need from every source you intend to use. Also try to focus your notes on your research question so that their relevance is clear when you read them later. To avoid confusion, work with separate entries for each piece of information recorded. At the top of each entry, identify the source through brief bibliographic identification (author and title), and note the page

numbers on which the information appears. Also helpful is to add personal notes, including ideas for possible use of the information or cross-references to other information. As noted in [Using Sources to Support your Writing](#) you will be using a variety of formats when borrowing from sources. Below is a quick review of these formats in terms of note-taking processes. By clarifying whether you are quoting directly, paraphrasing, or summarizing during these stages, you can record information accurately and thus take steps to avoid plagiarism.

Direct Quotations, Paraphrases, and Summaries

A direct quotation is an exact duplication of the author's words as they appear in the original source. In your notes, put quotation marks around direct quotations so that you remember these words are the author's, not yours. One advantage of copying exact quotations is that it allows you to decide later whether to include a quotation, paraphrase, or summary. In general, though, use direct quotations only when the author's words are particularly lively or persuasive.

A paraphrase is a restatement of the author's words in your own words. Paraphrase to simplify or clarify the original author's point. In your notes, use paraphrases when you need to record details but not exact words.

A summary is a brief condensation or distillation of the main point and most important details of the original source. Write a summary in your own words, with facts and ideas accurately represented. A summary is useful when specific details in the source are unimportant or irrelevant to your research question. You may find you can summarize several paragraphs or even an entire article or chapter in just a few sentences without losing useful information. It is a good idea to note when your entry contains a summary to remind you later that it omits detailed information. See [Paraphrasing and Summarizing](#) for more detailed information and examples of quotations, paraphrases, and summaries and when to use them.

Other Systems for Organizing Research Logs and Digital Note-Taking

Students often become frustrated and at times overwhelmed by the quantity of materials to be managed in the research process. If this is your first time working with both primary and secondary sources, finding ways to keep all of the information in one place and well organized is essential.

Because gathering primary evidence may be a relatively new practice, this section is designed to help you navigate the process. As mentioned earlier, information gathered in fieldwork is not catalogued, organized, indexed, or shelved for your convenience. Obtaining it requires diligence, energy, and planning. Online resources can assist you with keeping a research log. Your college library may have subscriptions to tools such as Todoist or EndNote. Consult with a librarian to find out whether you have access to any of these. If not, use something like the template shown in Figure 1, or another like it, as a template for creating your own

research notes and organizational tool. You will need to have a record of all field research data as well as the research log for all secondary sources.

A computer screen shows an electronic notecard that has separate fields for Title, Source, URL, and Page. Three windows read, “Copy, paste and annotate here,” “In your own words,” and “Original thinking here.”

Figure 1: [Electronic note card](#) by Rice University, OpenStax, licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this section is adapted from “[13.5 Research Process: Making Notes, Synthesizing Information, and Keeping a Research Log](#)” In *Writing Guide with Handbook* (OpenStax) by Michelle Bachelor Robinson, Maria Jerskey and featuring Toby Fulwiler, licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

Access for free at [Writing Guide with Handbook \(OpenStax\)](#)

Reference

Chai, B. C., van der Voort, J. R., Grofelnik, K., Eliasdottir, H. G., Klöss, I., Perez-Cueto, J. A. (2019). Which diet has the least environmental impact on our planet? A systematic review of vegan, vegetarian and omnivorous diets. *Sustainability*, 11(40), 4110. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11154110>

ANNOTATED STUDENT SAMPLE: RESEARCH LOG

Introduction

Lily Tran created this log entry during the research process for an argumentative research paper assigned in her first-year composition class, as shown in this Annotated Student Sample.

Living by Their Own Words

Planning to Write



“Arizona National Guard” by [The National Guard](#), licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Freewrite: I found this photograph in an article I was reading about food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. I copied and pasted it here as inspiration for my argumentative research paper.

Lily Tran includes a visual in the freewrite section of her research log. The visual may or may not appear in the final paper, but here, it serves to stimulate her writing and thinking about her topic and possibly connect to other information she finds.

For a sustainable future, food production and processing have to change. So does global distribution.

Tran begins to establish problem-and-solution reasoning, recognizing that there are different stages to food production and that all will be affected by any proposed solution.

The necessary changes will affect nearly all aspects of life, including world hunger, health and welfare, use of land resources, habitats, water, energy use and production, greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, and economics, as well as cultural and social values.

Tran also employs cause-and-effect reasoning in beginning to think about the effects of any proposed change.

These needed changes may not be popular, but people will have to accept them.

She recognizes potential counterarguments to address if the paper is to be persuasive.

Table 1: Research log entry

Information	Connection to Thesis/ Main Points	Notes/Cross-References/Synthesis
<p>Date: 12/07/2020</p> <p>Their report states, “If society continues on a ‘business-as-usual’ dietary trajectory, a 119% increase in edible crops grown will be required by 2050” (Berners-Lee et al., 2018, p. 1).</p>	<p>Shows why a solution to food sustainability is needed</p>	<p>Create a concrete example to support this statistic. For example, if Farmer Joe grows . . .</p> <p>Tie to the explanation of the problem for which I’m proposing a solution.</p>
<p><i>Tran cites and quotes an alarming statistic from a secondary source.</i></p>	<p><i>She makes a connection to her thesis.</i></p>	<p><i>She anticipates that not all readers will respond to the statistic alone. To counteract this possibility, she may decide to create an original anecdotal example.</i></p> <p><i>Tran then connects the information to the text structure: problem/solution.</i></p>
<p>Source/Citation: Berners-Lee, M., Kennelly, C., Watson, R., & Hewitt, C. N. (2018). Current global food production is sufficient to meet human nutritional needs in 2050 provided there is radical societal adaptation.” <i>Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene</i>, 6(52), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.310 <i>Tran uses APA 7th edition style guidelines to create this citation for her log entry. She includes all information needed for citing the entry in the works cited list for her paper.</i></p>		

Discussion Questions

1. If Lily Tran were to use the photo, what information or questions might she enter in the right-hand column of her research log?
2. Why do you think Tran has chosen a direct quotation instead of a summary or paraphrase?
3. Why is the information in the center column important to include in a research log?

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this section is adapted from “[13.4 Annotated Student Sample: Research Log](#)” In *Writing Guide with Handbook (OpenStax)* by Michelle Bachelor Robinson, Maria Jerskey and featuring Toby Fulwiler, licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#). Access for free at [Writing Guide with Handbook \(OpenStax\)](#)

Reference

Berners-Lee, M., Kennelly, C., Watson, R., & Hewitt, C. N. (2018). Current global food production is sufficient to meet human nutritional needs in 2050 provided there is radical societal adaptation.” *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, 6(52), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.310>

CREATING AN OUTLINE FOR AN ESSAY

In a college research and writing course, George-Anne was given a research assignment that asked her to write a 5-paragraph essay that integrated reliable research sources.

The Writing Process

Research:

George-Anne took the time to do an internet search, where she found links to radio podcasts and news articles. Then, she used her college library's database to find [some scholarly articles \[New Tab\]](#).

Outline Ideas:

After researching her topic and learning what experts on the subject had to say, George-Anne created a sentence outline for her paper.

George-Anne's Sentence Outline

- I. **Introduction** – Land acknowledgements are for showing respect towards Indigenous communities, but they fall short when they only seem insincere and include no action.
- II. **Land acknowledgements are meant to show respect for Indigenous communities and are becoming standard practice:**
Information from (Friesen, 2019), (Maga, 2019), (Wilkes et al, 2019)
 - a. Schools and government institutions do them before gathering
 - b. They increase awareness of Indigenous communities and their land rights.
 - c. They are intended to honour Truth & Reconciliation.
- III. **While land acknowledgements are becoming more common, they are sometimes flawed and even disrespectful:**

Information from (Friesen, 2019), (Maga, 2019), (Blenkinsop & Fettes, 2019)

- a. First Nations names are mispronounced or incorrect names are given.
- b. They can be a barrier to learning and give a false sense of something being accomplished, which can actually cause harm to the people they are supposed to honour.
- c. They lack meaning because they don't require any action

IV. To ensure that land acknowledgements help rather than harm, Indigenous scholars demand changes to the current approach:

Information from (Friesen, 2019), (Maga, 2019), (Blenkinsop & Fettes, 2019)

- a. These land acknowledgements should avoid the colonial way of viewing land and strive to reflect an Indigenous way of understanding.
- b. Scripts shouldn't be simply read; personal connections should also be made
- c. Land acknowledgements should reflect on the harms of colonialism and express ways to disrupt the system to stop these harms.

- V. **Conclusion:** Land acknowledgements must go beyond a scripted list of Indigenous communities and treaties.

References

- Blenkinsop, S., & Fettes, M. (2020). Land, language and listening: The transformations that can flow from acknowledging Indigenous land. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 54(4), 1033-1046. <https://doi-org.georgian.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12470>
- Friesen, J. (2019, June 27). As Indigenous land acknowledgements become the norm, critics question whether the gesture has lost its meaning. *Globe & Mail* (Toronto, Canada), A1.
- Maga, C. (2019, April 10). Land acknowledgements capture the mood of an awkward stage; Anishinaabe writer Hayden King says statements concerning Indigenous recognition don't negate "ongoing disposition" of people. *The Toronto Star* (Toronto, Ontario), E1
- Wilkes, R., Duong, A., Kesler, L., & Ramos, H. (2017). Canadian University Acknowledgment of Indigenous Lands, Treaties, and Peoples. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 54(1), 89-120. <https://doi-org.georgian.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/cars.12140>

Drafting Ideas & Integrating Sources

Once her outline was completed, George-Anne followed the steps shown in [Creating a Rough Draft for a](#)

[Research Paper](#). She expanded on the sentences of her outline, took care to integrate sources [using APA in-text citations \[New Tab\]](#), and set up her Reference list following [APA conventions for references \[New Tab\]](#).

Revising

George-Anne followed the advice in [Developing a Final Draft \[New Tab\]](#) but also decided to book a session with her college Writing Centre. During her appointment, her tutor encouraged her to read her work aloud; this helped her identify and edit some problems with her sentence structure. Her tutor drew her attention to the fact that she needed stronger transitions between her paragraphs. Adding the transitions helped improve the cohesion of her essay. She also learned about some small errors with her reference list. Finally, her essay was ready to submit.

Read George-Anne's Final Essay: Land Acknowledgements

Read George-Anne's Final essay on Land Acknowledgements in Plain text

Note: HTML/plain text & Pressbooks do not always display page layout or APA formatting such as page numbers, spacing, margins or indentation accurately. Please review [APA formatting rules](#) to ensure you meet APA guidelines with your own work. The text version is included here in HTML format for ease of reading/use. You may also want to [View George-Anne's paper in PDF format](#).

Land Acknowledgements

George-Anne Lerner

The remains of thousands of murdered Indigenous children are being discovered on the grounds of former Residential Schools. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called for the Canadian government to recognize the tragic history of residential schools and the ongoing problems faced by Indigenous people. One response to this call to action is the land acknowledgement. Announcements that name the

territories, communities, and treaties are now heard at the beginning of many events and gatherings. Even though these statements are made to show respect and to raise awareness about Indigenous communities, mistakes are sometimes made, and the reading of a script can seem like an empty gesture. Indigenous scholars and leaders are asking that institutions go beyond just reading a land acknowledgement; they hope for a stronger focus on taking action. Land acknowledgements are intended to show respect towards Indigenous communities and their land rights, but these announcements can feel like empty words to the people they are meant to honour; to truly show respect, land acknowledgements need to take action beyond reciting a script.

Land acknowledgements show respect for Indigenous communities and they are becoming standard. Colleges, Universities, school boards, governments and other institutions across Canada now make public acknowledgements of Indigenous peoples, lands, and treaties. Many public gatherings, events, and even email signatures include a land acknowledgement (Friesen, 2019). For example, as Maga (2019) reports, the City of Toronto's statement reads: "We acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples" (para. 1). Land acknowledgements are intended to increase awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights, and to improve the experience of Indigenous students and communities. They are done in an effort to honour the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report (Wilkes et al., 2019), which calls for significant changes in order to reconcile Canada's unjust treatment of Indigenous people.

While land acknowledgements are becoming more common, some concerns are being raised; they are sometimes flawed and even disrespectful. Friesen (2019) shows that land acknowledgements are criticized as empty gestures as First Nations names are often mispronounced and incorrect nations are named. Anishinaabe scholar Hayden King regrets helping Ryerson write its land acknowledgement; he fears that these acknowledgements actually prevent learning about Indigenous people and treaty relationships (Friesen, 2019). King points out that the current style of land acknowledgement can sound "detached, shallow and give a false sense of progressive

accomplishment” (Maga, 2019, para. 2). They may “cause harm to the people they’re supposed to celebrate” (Maga, 2019, para. 3). Blenkinsop & Fettes (2019) state that the problem with these acknowledgements is that “they stop with a notion of land as something one lives on, rather than continuing on into an understanding of land as something we are part of” (p. 1036). The acknowledgements lack meaning because they do not demand any action from the speakers or listeners. Indigenous leaders argue that these land acknowledgements do not acknowledge the privileges that settlers have due to the legacy of colonialism, or recognize the trauma that continues as a result of colonialist societal structures, which actually can harm the same people these acknowledgements are meant to respect.

In order to ensure that land acknowledgements help rather than harm, Indigenous scholars demand a change to the current approach. Land acknowledgements “have a vital function when done correctly” (Maga, 2019, para. 7), but must do more than naming Indigenous territories, languages and treaties. These land acknowledgements should not express the colonial way of viewing land as a resource or commodity, a thing that is owned. Instead, they should emphasize an Indigenous way of understanding. Blenkinsop & Fettes (2019) explain that the Land is more than an object; it is a teacher, offering a dialogue:

The land is there, outside our windows, under our feet, all around us, thinking, feeling, conversing and offering its teachings. When we start to really listen, to the land and to the people whose identities and traditions are fundamentally shaped through long dialogue with the land, transformation follows (p. 1043).

Scripts should not be simply read without any reflection. Instead, an effort should be made to include Indigenous ways of thinking and people should expand on them to include personal information. People delivering land acknowledgements should speak about “their own connections to the land and communities they are attempting to honour” (Friesen, 2019, para. 20). A speaker who expands on their own family history will give deeper insights and connections, which leads to a more meaningful acknowledgement. Additionally, speakers should acknowledge both the impact of colonialism and express an intention to disrupt the current injustices that are part of society.

As land acknowledgements become more routine across institutions, Indigenous

leaders ask that these statements be approached with respect. Land acknowledgements must go beyond a scripted list of Indigenous communities and treaties. For reconciliation to begin, land acknowledgements must become part of a conversation that calls attention to our responsibilities as caretakers of the land, and sets intentions for action in ending the systematic harms on Indigenous peoples.

References

- Blenkinsop, S., & Fettes, M. (2020). Land, language and listening: The transformations that can flow from acknowledging Indigenous land. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 54*(4), 1033–1046. <https://doi-org.georgian.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12470>
- Friesen, J. (2019, June 27). As Indigenous land acknowledgements become the norm, critics question whether the gesture has lost its meaning. *Globe & Mail* (Toronto, Canada), A1.
- Maga, C. (2019, April 10). Land acknowledgements capture the mood of an awkward stage; Anishinaabe writer Hayden King says statements concerning Indigenous recognition don't negate "ongoing disposition" of people. *The Toronto Star* (Toronto, Ontario), E1
- Wilkes, R., Duong, A., Kesler, L., & Ramos, H. (2017). Canadian University Acknowledgment of Indigenous Lands, Treaties, and Peoples. *Canadian Review of Sociology, 54*(1), 89–120. <https://doi-org.georgian.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/cars.12140>

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Summary

In this module, you learned how to plan a research essay. You also examined the importance of developing strong note taking skills in preparation for your Essay Outline Assignment, which you completed at the end of this module. At the end of the day, it does not matter **how** you take research notes, as long as you record information in a way that prevents plagiarism and helps you with your assignments. So, experiment and pick a style that works for you—and be consistent.

Congratulations on finishing Unit 4: Research Skills. You are now ready to move on to Unit 5: Presentation Skills.

Attribution & References

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- “Student sample research essay” by Amanda Quibell is licensed under [CC-BY-NC 4.0](#).
- Adapted to remove some instructions.

CREATING A ROUGH DRAFT FOR A RESEARCH PAPER

After doing all of your research, you are ready to write your research paper. Putting your thinking and research into words is exciting, but it can also be challenging. In this section, you will learn strategies for handling the more challenging aspects of writing a research paper, such as integrating material from your sources, citing information correctly, and avoiding any misuse of your sources.

The Structure of a Research Paper

Research papers generally follow the same basic structure:

1. an introduction that presents the writer's thesis,
2. a body section that develops the thesis with supporting points and evidence,
3. and a conclusion that revisits the thesis and provides additional insights or suggestions for further research.

Your writing voice will come across most strongly in your introduction and conclusion, as you work to attract your readers' interest and establish your thesis. These sections usually do not cite sources at length. They focus on the big picture, not specific details. In contrast, the body of your paper will cite sources extensively. As you present your ideas, you will support your points with details from your research.

Writing Your Introduction

There are several approaches to writing an introduction, each of which fulfills the same goals. The introduction should get readers' attention, provide background information, and present the writer's thesis. Many writers like to begin with one of the following catchy openers:

- A surprising fact
- A thought-provoking question
- An attention-getting quote
- A brief anecdote that illustrates a larger concept
- A connection between your topic and your readers' experiences

The next few sentences place the opening in context by presenting background information. From there, the writer builds toward a thesis, which is traditionally placed at the end of the introduction. Think of your thesis as a signpost that lets readers know in what direction the paper is headed.

Jorge decided to begin his research paper by connecting his topic to readers' daily experiences. Read the first draft of his introduction. The thesis is underlined. Note how Jorge progresses from the opening sentences to background information to his thesis.

Jorge's Introduction

Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

I. Introduction

Over the past decade, increasing numbers of dieters have jumped on the low-carb bandwagon. Some studies estimate that approximately 40 million Americans, or about 20 percent of the population, are attempting to restrict their intake of food high in carbohydrates (Sanders and Katz, 2004; Hirsch, 2004). Proponents of low-carb diets say they are not only the most effective way to lose weight, but they also yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, some doctors claim that low-carb diets are overrated and caution that their long-term effects are unknown. Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

Check Your Understanding: Writing an Introductory Paragraph

Write the introductory paragraph of your research paper. Try using one of the techniques listed in this section to write an engaging introduction. Be sure to include background information about the topic that leads to your thesis.

Tip

Writers often work out of sequence when writing a research paper. If you find yourself struggling to write an engaging introduction, you may wish to write the body of your paper first. Writing the body sections first will help you clarify your main points. Writing the introduction should then be easier. You may have a better sense of how to introduce the paper after you have drafted some or all of the body.

Writing Your Conclusion

In your introduction, you tell readers where they are headed. In your conclusion, you recap where they have been. For this reason, some writers prefer to write their conclusions soon after they have written their introduction. However, this method may not work for all writers. Other writers prefer to write their conclusion at the end of the paper, after writing the body paragraphs. No process is absolutely right or absolutely wrong; find the one that best suits you.

No matter when you compose the conclusion, it should sum up your main ideas and revisit your thesis. The conclusion should not simply echo the introduction or rely on bland summary statements, such as “In this paper, I have demonstrated that...” In fact, avoid repeating your thesis verbatim from the introduction. Restate it in different words that reflect the new perspective gained through your research. That helps keep your ideas fresh for your readers. An effective writer might conclude a paper by asking a new question the research inspired, revisiting an anecdote presented earlier, or reminding readers of how the topic relates to their lives.

Writing at Work

If your job involves writing or reading scientific papers, it helps to understand how professional researchers use the structure described in this section. A scientific paper begins with an abstract that briefly summarizes the entire paper. The introduction explains the purpose of the research, briefly summarizes previous research, and presents the researchers’ hypothesis. The body provides details about the study, such as who participated in it, what the researchers measured, and what results they recorded. The conclusion presents the researchers’ interpretation of the data, or what they learned.

Using Source Material in Your Paper

One of the challenges of writing a research paper is successfully integrating your ideas with material from your sources. Your paper must explain what you think, or it will read like a disconnected string of facts and quotations. However, you also need to support your ideas with research, or they will seem insubstantial. How do you strike the right balance?

You have already taken a step in the right direction by writing your introduction. The introduction and conclusion function like the frame around a picture. They define and limit your topic and place your research in context.

In the body paragraphs of your paper, you will need to integrate ideas carefully at the paragraph level and at the sentence level. You will use topic sentences in your paragraphs to make sure readers understand the significance of any facts, details, or quotations you cite. You will also include sentences that transition between ideas from your research, either within a paragraph or between paragraphs. At the sentence level, you will need to think carefully about how you introduce paraphrased and quoted material.

Earlier you learned about summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting when taking notes. In the next few sections, you will learn how to use these techniques in the body of your paper to weave in source material to support your ideas.

Summarizing Sources

When you summarize material from a source, you zero in on the main points and restate them concisely in your own words. This technique is appropriate when only the major ideas are relevant to your paper or when you need to simplify complex information into a few key points for your readers.

Be sure to review the source material as you summarize it. Identify the main idea and restate it as concisely as you can—preferably in one sentence. Depending on your purpose, you may also add another sentence or two condensing any important details or examples. Check your summary to make sure it is accurate and complete.

In his draft, Jorge summarized research materials that presented scientists' findings about low-carbohydrate diets. Read the following passage from a trade magazine article and Jorge's summary of the article.

Trade Magazine Source

Assessing the Efficacy of Low-Carbohydrate Diets

Adrienne Howell, Ph.D.

Over the past few years, a number of clinical studies have explored whether high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets are more effective for weight loss than other frequently recommended diet plans, such as diets that drastically curtail fat intake (Pritikin) or that emphasize consuming lean meats, grains, vegetables, and a moderate amount of unsaturated fats (the Mediterranean diet). A 2009 study found that obese teenagers who followed a low-carbohydrate diet lost an average of 15.6 kilograms over a six-month period, whereas teenagers following a low-fat diet or a Mediterranean diet lost an average of 11.1 kilograms and 9.3 kilograms respectively. Two 2010 studies that measured weight loss for obese adults following these same three diet plans found similar results. Over three months, subjects on the low-carbohydrate diet plan lost anywhere from four to six kilograms more than subjects who followed other diet plans.

Jorge's Summary with parenthetical in-text citation

In three recent studies, researchers compared outcomes for obese subjects who followed either a low-carbohydrate diet, a low-fat diet, or a Mediterranean diet and found that subjects following a low-carbohydrate diet lost more weight in the same time (Howell, 2010).

Tip

A summary restates ideas in your own words—but for specialized or clinical terms, you may need to use terms that appear in the original source. For instance, Jorge used the term *obese* in his summary because related words such as *heavy* or *overweight* have a different clinical meaning.

Check Your Understanding: One-sentence Summary

On a separate sheet of paper, practice summarizing by writing a one-sentence summary of the same passage that Jorge already summarized.

Paraphrasing Sources

When you paraphrase material from a source, restate the information from an entire sentence or passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them.

Again, it is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing—that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources. A true paraphrase restates ideas using the writer’s own language and style.

In his draft, Jorge frequently paraphrased details from sources. At times, he needed to rewrite a sentence more than once to ensure he was paraphrasing ideas correctly. Read the passage from a website. Then read Jorge’s initial attempt at paraphrasing it, followed by the final version of his paraphrase.

Webpage Information—Research Source

Dieters nearly always get great results soon after they begin following a low-carbohydrate diet, but these results tend to taper off after the first few months, particularly because many dieters find it difficult to follow a low-carbohydrate diet plan consistently.

Jorge's Summary

People usually see encouraging outcomes shortly after they go on a low-carbohydrate diet, but their progress slows down after a short while, especially because most discover that it is a challenge to adhere to the diet strictly (Heinz, 2009).

After reviewing the paraphrased sentence, Jorge realized he was following the original source too closely. He did not want to quote the full passage verbatim, so he again attempted to restate the idea in his own style.

Jorge's Revised Summary

Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009).

Check Your Understanding: Paraphrasing

On a separate sheet of paper, follow these steps to practice paraphrasing.

1. Choose an important idea or detail from your notes.
2. Without looking at the original source, restate the idea in your own words.
3. Check your paraphrase against the original text in the source. Make sure both your language and your sentence structure are original.
4. Revise your paraphrase if necessary.

Quoting Sources Directly

Most of the time, you will summarize or paraphrase source material instead of quoting directly. Doing so shows that you understand your research well enough to write about it confidently in your own words.

However, direct quotes can be powerful when used sparingly and with purpose.

Quoting directly can sometimes help you make a point in a colorful way. If an author's words are especially vivid, memorable, or well phrased, quoting them may help hold your reader's interest. Direct quotations from an interviewee or an eyewitness may help you personalize an issue for readers. And when you analyze primary sources, such as a historical speech or a work of literature, quoting extensively is often necessary to illustrate your points. These are valid reasons to use quotations.

Less experienced writers, however, sometimes overuse direct quotations in a research paper because it seems easier than paraphrasing. At best, this reduces the effectiveness of the quotations. At worst, it results in a paper that seems haphazardly pasted together from outside sources. Use quotations sparingly for greater impact.

When you do choose to quote directly from a source, follow these guidelines:

- Make sure you have transcribed the original statement accurately.
- Represent the author's ideas honestly. Quote enough of the original text to reflect the author's point accurately.
- Never use a stand-alone quotation. Always integrate the quoted material into your own sentence.
- Use ellipses (...) if you need to omit a word or phrase. Use brackets [] if you need to replace a word or phrase.
- Make sure any omissions or changed words do not alter the meaning of the original text. Omit or replace words only when absolutely necessary to shorten the text or to make it grammatically correct within your sentence.
- Remember to include correctly formatted citations that follow the assigned style guide.

Jorge interviewed a dietician as part of his research, and he decided to quote her words in his paper. Read an excerpt from the interview and Jorge's use of it, which follows.

Source—Interview (personal communication)

Personally, I don't really buy into all of the hype about low-carbohydrate miracle diets like Atkins

and so on. Sure, for some people, they are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well.

Jorge's Summary—with narrative in-text citation

Registered dietician D. Kwon (personal communication, August 10, 2010) admits, “Personally, I don’t really buy into all of the hype....Sure, for some people, [low-carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well.”

Notice how Jorge smoothly integrated the quoted material by starting the sentence with an introductory phrase. His use of ellipses and brackets did not change the source’s meaning.

Documenting Source Material

Throughout the writing process, be scrupulous about documenting information taken from sources. The purpose of doing so is twofold:

1. To give credit to other writers or researchers for their ideas
2. To allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired

You will cite sources within the body of your paper and at the end of the paper in your bibliography. For this assignment, you will use the citation format used by the American Psychological Association (also known as APA style).

Citing Sources in the Body of Your Paper

In-text citations document your sources within the body of your paper. These include two vital pieces of information: the author’s name and the year the source material was published. When quoting a print source, also include in the citation the page number where the quoted material originally appears. The page number

will follow the year in the in-text citation. Page numbers are necessary only when content has been directly quoted, not when it has been summarized or paraphrased.

Within a paragraph, this information may appear as part of your introduction to the material or as a parenthetical citation at the end of a sentence. Read the examples that follow.

Jorge's Summary—with narrative in-text citation

Leibowitz (2008) found that low-carbohydrate diets often helped subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar levels.

The introduction to the source material includes the author's name followed by the year of publication in parentheses.

Jorge's Summary with parenthetical in-text citation

Low-carbohydrate diets often help subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar levels (Leibowitz, 2008).

The parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence includes the author's name, a comma, and the year the source was published. The period at the end of the sentence comes after the parentheses.

Creating a List of References

Each of the sources you cite in the body text will appear in a references list at the end of your paper. While in-text citations provide the most basic information about the source, your references section will include additional publication details. In general, you will include the following information:

- The author's last name followed by his or her first (and sometimes middle) initial
- The year the source was published
- The source title

- For articles in periodicals, the full name of the periodical, along with the volume and issue number and the pages where the article appeared

Additional information may be included for different types of sources, such as online sources.

Using Primary and Secondary Research

As you write your draft, be mindful of how you are using primary and secondary source material to support your points. Recall that primary sources present firsthand information. Secondary sources are one step removed from primary sources. They present a writer's analysis or interpretation of primary source materials. How you balance primary and secondary source material in your paper will depend on the topic and assignment.

Using Primary Sources Effectively

Some types of research papers must use primary sources extensively to achieve their purpose. Any paper that analyzes a primary text or presents the writer's own experimental research falls in this category. Here are a few examples:

- A paper for a literature course analyzing several poems by Emily Dickinson
- A paper for a political science course comparing televised speeches delivered by two presidential candidates
- A paper for a communications course discussing gender biases in television commercials
- A paper for a business administration course that discusses the results of a survey the writer conducted with local businesses to gather information about their work-from-home and flextime policies
- A paper for an elementary education course that discusses the results of an experiment the writer conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different methods of mathematics instruction

For these types of papers, primary research is the main focus. If you are writing about a work (including nonprint works, such as a movie or a painting), it is crucial to gather information and ideas from the original work, rather than relying solely on others' interpretations. And, of course, if you take the time to design and conduct your own field research, such as a survey, a series of interviews, or an experiment, you will want to discuss it in detail. For example, the interviews may provide interesting responses that you want to share with your reader.

Using Secondary Sources Effectively

For some assignments, it makes sense to rely more on secondary sources than primary sources. If you are not analyzing a text or conducting your own field research, you will need to use secondary sources extensively.

As much as possible, use secondary sources that are closely linked to primary research, such as a journal article presenting the results of the authors' scientific study or a book that cites interviews and case studies. These sources are more reliable and add more value to your paper than sources that are further removed from primary research. For instance, a popular magazine article on junk-food addiction might be several steps removed from the original scientific study on which it is loosely based. As a result, the article may distort, sensationalize, or misinterpret the scientists' findings.

Even if your paper is largely based on primary sources, you may use secondary sources to develop your ideas. For instance, an analysis of Alfred Hitchcock's films would focus on the films themselves as a primary source, but might also cite commentary from critics. A paper that presents an original experiment would include some discussion of similar prior research in the field.

Jorge knew he did not have the time, resources, or experience needed to conduct original experimental research for his paper. Because he was relying on secondary sources to support his ideas, he made a point of citing sources that were not far removed from primary research.

Tip

Some sources could be considered primary or secondary sources, depending on the writer's purpose for using them. For instance, if a writer's purpose is to inform readers about how the No Child Left Behind legislation has affected elementary education, a Time magazine article on the subject would be a secondary source. However, suppose the writer's purpose is to analyze how the news media has portrayed the effects of the No Child Left Behind legislation. In that case, articles about the legislation in news magazines like Time, Newsweek, and US News & World Report would be primary sources. They provide firsthand examples of the media coverage the writer is analyzing.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Your research paper presents your thinking about a topic, supported and developed by other people's ideas and information. It is crucial to always distinguish between the two—as you conduct research, as you plan your paper, and as you write. Failure to do so can lead to plagiarism.

Intentional and Accidental Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of misrepresenting someone else's work as your own. Sometimes a writer plagiarizes work on purpose—for instance, by purchasing an essay from a website and submitting it as original course work. In other cases, a writer may commit accidental plagiarism due to carelessness, haste, or misunderstanding. To avoid unintentional plagiarism, follow these guidelines:

- Understand what types of information must be cited.
- Understand what constitutes fair use of a source.
- Keep source materials and notes carefully organized.
- Follow guidelines for summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources.

When to Cite

Any idea or fact taken from an outside source must be cited, in both the body of your paper and the references list. The only exceptions are facts or general statements that are common knowledge. Common-knowledge facts or general statements are commonly supported by and found in multiple sources. For example, a writer would not need to cite the statement that most breads, pastas, and cereals are high in carbohydrates; this is well known and well documented. However, if a writer explained in detail the differences among the chemical structures of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, a citation would be necessary. When in doubt, cite.

Fair Use/Fair Dealing

In recent years, issues related to the fair use (USA) and Fair Dealing (Canada) of sources have been prevalent in popular culture. Recording artists, for example, may disagree about the extent to which one has the right to sample another's music. For academic purposes, however, the guidelines for fair use are reasonably straightforward.

Writers may quote from or paraphrase material from previously published works without formally obtaining the copyright holder's permission. Fair use/Fair Dealing means that the writer legitimately uses brief excerpts from source material to support and develop his or her own ideas. For instance, a columnist may excerpt a few sentences from a novel when writing a book review. However, quoting or paraphrasing another's work at excessive length, to the extent that large sections of the writing are unoriginal, is not fair use or fair dealing.

As he worked on his draft, Jorge was careful to cite his sources correctly and not to rely excessively on any one source. Occasionally, however, he caught himself quoting a source at great length. In those instances, he

highlighted the paragraph in question so that he could go back to it later and revise. Read the example, along with Jorge's revision.

Jorge's Summary with unoriginal writing

Heinz (2009) found that "subjects in the low-carbohydrate group (30% carbohydrates; 40% protein, 30% fat) had a mean weight loss of 10 kg (22 lbs) over a 4-month period" (para. 7). These results were "noticeably better than results for subjects on a low-fat diet (45% carbohydrates, 35% protein, 20% fat)" whose average weight loss was only "7 kg (15.4 lbs) in the same period" (Heinz, 2009, para. 8). From this, it can be concluded that "low-carbohydrate diets obtain more rapid results" (Heinz, 2009, p. 82). Other researchers agree that "at least in the short term, patients following low-carbohydrate diets enjoy greater success" than those who follow alternative plans (Johnson & Crowe, 2010, p. 25).

After reviewing the paragraph, Jorge realized that he had drifted into unoriginal writing. Most of the paragraph was taken verbatim from a single article. Although Jorge had enclosed the material in quotation marks, he knew it was not an appropriate way to use the research in his paper.

Jorge's Revised Summary

Low-carbohydrate diets may indeed be superior to other diet plans for short-term weight loss. In a study comparing low-carbohydrate diets and low-fat diets, Heinz (2009) found that subjects who followed a low-carbohydrate plan (30% of total calories) for 4 months lost, on average, about 3 kilograms more than subjects who followed a low-fat diet for the same time. Heinz concluded that these plans yield quick results, an idea supported by a similar study conducted by Johnson and Crowe (2010). What remains to be seen, however, is whether this initial success can be sustained for longer periods.

As Jorge revised the paragraph, he realized he did not need to quote these sources directly. Instead, he paraphrased their most important findings. He also made sure to include a topic sentence stating the main idea of the paragraph and a concluding sentence that transitioned to the next major topic in his essay.

Working with Sources Carefully

Disorganization and carelessness sometimes lead to plagiarism. For instance, a writer may be unable to provide a complete, accurate citation if he didn't record bibliographical information. A writer may cut and paste a passage from a website into her paper and later forget where the material came from. A writer who procrastinates may rush through a draft, which easily leads to sloppy paraphrasing and inaccurate quotations. Any of these actions can create the appearance of plagiarism and lead to negative consequences.

Carefully organizing your time and notes is the best guard against these forms of plagiarism. Maintain a detailed working bibliography and thorough notes throughout the research process. Check original sources again to clear up any uncertainties. Allow plenty of time for writing your draft so there is no temptation to cut corners.

Writing at Work

Citing other people's work appropriately is just as important in the workplace as it is in school. If you need to consult outside sources to research a document you are creating, follow the general guidelines already discussed, as well as any industry-specific citation guidelines. For more extensive use of others' work—for instance, requesting permission to link to another company's website on your own corporate website—always follow your employer's established procedures.

Academic Integrity

The concepts and strategies discussed in this section connect to a larger issue—academic integrity. You maintain your integrity as a member of an academic community by representing your work and others' work honestly and by using other people's work only in legitimately accepted ways. It is a point of honour taken seriously in every academic discipline and career field.

Academic integrity violations have serious educational and professional consequences. Even when cheating and plagiarism go undetected, they still result in a student's failure to learn necessary research and writing skills. Students who are found guilty of academic integrity violations face consequences ranging from a failing grade to expulsion from the university. Employees may be fired for plagiarism and do irreparable damage to their professional reputation. In short, it is never worth the risk.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this section is adapted from “[7.1 – Creating A Rough Draft For A Research Paper](#)” In *Communication Essentials for College* by Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). / An adaptation from ” [12.1 Creating a Rough Draft for a Research Paper](#)” In *Writing for Success* by University of Minnesota licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). / Small edits and updates to include “Fair Dealing” were made, adjustments to APA citation.

UNIT 5: PRESENTATION SKILLS

English Degree Entrance Preparation compiled by Carrie Molinski & Sue Slessor.

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Please visit the web version of [English for Degree Entrance Preparation](#) to access the complete book, interactive activities and videos.

Table of Contents

[Presentation Techniques](#)

- [Designing the Presentation](#)
- [Planning the Presentation](#)

[Creating Presentations](#)

- [Giving a Presentation](#)
- [Delivering the Presentation](#)
- [Presentation Aids](#)

PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES

Introduction

Welcome to one of the most creative chapters that introduces the art of presentations. In this chapter, you will learn essential knowledge and strategies to ensure your presentations leave a lasting impact. You will begin to understand that all facets of preparing yourself, creating a presentation that includes content-connected slides, leveraging the art of practicing, and considering your audience create connections that are paramount to the end result.

Visual design plays a pivotal role in captivating your audience. In this chapter, you will learn the basics of visual design—where to find appropriate images and how to effectively storyboard your presentation—and discover critical aspects to consider during rehearsals to ensure that you are fully prepared to deliver a polished and confident presentation. You will also learn the value of dressing comfortably yet professionally as related to the audience to which you are presenting.

Learning Outcomes

- Use effective presentation strategies including creating slides and planning.
- Implement the FAST format as a framework for effective presentation skills.
- Develop a storyboard (outline) for your presentation.
- Recognize characteristics of effective speakers.

To Do List

- Read “Designing the Presentation” in *Student Success*.
- Read “Planning the Presentation” in *Student Success*.
- Complete Presentation Application Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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DESIGNING THE PRESENTATION

If your presentation includes slides and images, they must be clear, compelling and well-organized. In this chapter you'll learn the basics of visual design, where to find great images, and how to storyboard your presentation.

Getting Started

Before starting on your slides create a **storyboard** that's based on your presentation outline (for details on outlines see [How to Structure Great Presentations \[New Tab\]](#) in "Business Presentation Skills" by Lucinda Atwood and Christian Westin). The storyboard helps you organize and plan your **slide deck**, including the order slides appear and what text or images you'll include on each slide.

We recommend using sticky notes to create your storyboard, with one sticky note representing one slide. Sticky notes help you organize your slides because they're so easy to move around, edit and delete. They'll save you lots of time!

In the example below you can see that you don't need to be an artist or expert to make an effective storyboard.

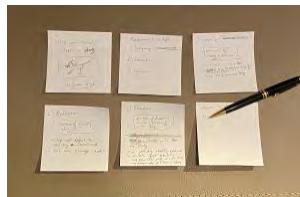


Image courtesy Christian Westin

Creating Slides

When making slides, make sure to include these five elements: organization, titles & text, visual design, content and user experience.

Need help making slides?

Georgian College students have access to free [tutoring](#). The tutors can help you with PowerPoint, Google Slides and other apps. They won't create your presentation for you, but they can help you get started, and answer specific questions.

Organization

Your slide deck must be logically organized to match the order of your presentation. Make sure that information is presented in a logical way. For example, if you're talking about something that happens in a sequence, make sure it's in the correct order in your slides. And present information based on its importance. The size and list format of key points, sub-points and sub-subpoints should be consistent with their importance.

Titles & text

Consistent—Throughout your slide deck, titles and text should be consistent in size, shape, placement, bullet and heading hierarchy, and formatting. If any of this does change, it should be an intentional design choice that reflects the presentation. Be especially careful with team projects—it's easy to lose consistency when more than one person creates the slides.

Brief—Your slides are not a script. If you include too much information on them, your audience will be reading, not listening to you. Slides should reinforce your key points, highlighting only the most important information. Share the rest verbally— anecdotes, smaller details and extra information.

Tip

There are two great ways to help you keep slides brief: The **1-6-6 Method** recommends that each slide have a maximum of 1 idea, 6 bullet points, and 6 words per bullet. The **1-3-5 Method** is similar: it suggests 1 idea and 3 bullet points per slide, with 5 words per bullet.

Fonts—Your audience might have less than perfect vision or a small device, so make type easy to read. If

you're not sure which font to use, avoid fancy decorative fonts and use a standard font like Arial, Helvetica or Times. Unless you're a trained designer, limit the number of fonts you use to about three per slide deck.

Use high-contrast colours for text, such as black on white, or white on navy blue. If you're placing text on an image, use a solid background colour in the text box.

We recommend using at least size 32 for your text. If you're using a font size smaller than 32, test your slides to make sure text is visible from the back of the room or on a small device.

Spelling & grammar—Check your spelling and grammar! (Most presentation apps include spell-check tools.) Typos and grammar errors make you look sloppy and unprofessional.

Animations—You can use the app's animation tools to move objects and text on, off or around a slide. You've probably seen slides with bullet points that appear one at a time. Animations are useful when you want to gradually reveal information. For example, if you want the audience to focus on one point at a time, or when you want to ask a question before showing the answer.

Limit the number of animations you use, and avoid whimsical or unnecessary ones—they can make your slides annoying and unprofessional.

Transitions—You can use transitions, like fade-in or fade-out, when you're moving from one slide to the next. To avoid distracting your audience, don't use too many different types of transitions, and avoid overly dramatic transitions. Just like animations, a little goes a long way.

Visual design

You don't have to be a designer to make professional slides; most apps include professionally designed templates, or you can start with a blank slide. Whichever you choose, make sure the visual design supports your content and strengthens your message. Slides should relate to each other visually: colours, layout, text and images should be consistent.

Consistent—All slides should have a consistent design as though they were created by one person, not cobbled together from multiple sources. If any of this does change, it should be an intentional design choice that reflects the presentation. Be especially careful during team projects—it's easy to lose consistency when more than one person creates the slides.

Alignment—Keep slides looking clean and professional by aligning various text or image elements. For example, text is almost always left-aligned (except captions and titles). Space text and images so they're balanced and visually pleasing. PowerPoint shows alignment markings to help with this.

Branding—Branded elements make your slides look professional. You can use your brand's colours and logo on the title page, and/or at the top or bottom of each slide. Your branding may include fonts, text size and colour. Whatever you choose, make sure all text is easy to read and not distracting.

Images—Human brains love images! Include images in your slides to add interest and explain key points. Make sure every image is high quality, high resolution, relevant and appropriate, large enough to be easily seen

from afar, not stretched or distorted, and free of watermarks. (More about watermarks in *Using Other People's Images* below)

Single images are generally better than collages because you want slides to be uncluttered. No matter how cute they are, *don't* include images that are unprofessional or unrelated to your subject—such as emojis, minion pictures and bad clip art.

Charts & graphs—Well-displayed information can enhance your audience's understanding and help to convince them that you're a professional expert. Charts and graphs are fantastic ways to show data, describe relationships, and help your audience understand a key point. Make sure the labels and titles are large enough to be easily read, and remove unnecessary details; you can verbally explain details and background information. If your presentation includes handouts, you can show the basic chart or graph on screen, and add a more detailed version in the handout. See *Which Graph, Chart, or Visual Should I Use?* below for examples and additional guidelines.

Content

Complete—Your presentation should include at least one slide for each key point. Make sure the most important information of your presentation is on your slides.

Makes sense—Information presented is well researched and makes sense. Your content should also be interesting or exciting.

Fits audience—Assume that your audience is smart like you, but doesn't have specialist knowledge. Take the time to explain anything that the majority of people might not know.

Citations and references—For facts, quotes, or other statistics, you may want to include your source on the slide, especially if it adds credibility. Otherwise, sources (including for images) are listed in 1) the notes section; and 2) in a list of sources at the end of your presentation.

Authorship—Include your full name at the start of your slides. You may want to include your name and contact information on your last slide.

Engages the left & right brain—Audience members engage and remember better when you engage the “left brain” (logic, facts, science, numbers, and hard data) and the “right brain” (emotion, colour, artistic and sensory information like music, videos, and other media).

Audience experience

This element is a bit different from the ones above because it focuses on the live integration of your slides and your presentation.

Slides enhance the presentation—Remember that you're the star of the show, and your slides are there to support your live delivery. For this reason, it's important to ensure that you don't use the slides as a teleprompter—always practice and know your entire presentation and slideshow thoroughly.

Number of slides is reasonable—As a general rule, 1–2 slides per minute is appropriate. Practise delivering your presentation to ensure you’re not rushing through too many slides, or forcing the audience to stare at the same slide for several minutes.

Agenda/Overview—Longer or more complex presentations often include an agenda or overview slide. Shorter presentations typically don’t use them.

Animations & transitions executed—When practicing your presentation, remember which slides have animations or transitions, and practice advancing your slides at the right time. Sometimes presenters get caught up in their content and forget to move the slides ahead. This is especially common during online presentations.

Using Other People's Images

You can use your own images in your presentations. You can also use downloaded images, but be careful to use copyright-free images, and credit them properly.

Many images that you see online are copyrighted, meaning you can’t use them without the creator’s permission. A lot of those images have watermarks to make sure people don’t use them, or pay to use them. Don’t use watermarked images—it’s illegal and unethical. A watermark looks like this:



Image courtesy of Lucinda Atwood.

Where to find images

Many high-quality images are freely available online. Here are some places to find them:

1. [OpenVerse](#)

2. [Pexels](#)
3. [Unsplash](#)
4. [Pixabay](#)
5. [Flicker – Creative Commons license](#)
6. [Google](#): Enter your search words and click *Search*. Then click *Images*, and *Tools* (underneath the search bar). Then click *Usage Rights* and select *Creative Commons Licenses*.

How to give credit

Always give credit to the creators of anything you didn't create—including images, charts, graphs, video, audio and gifs. You don't need to credit anything you made, but you might want to include a note so your instructor knows it's your creation.

1. List all your image credits on one blank slide
2. Make it the last slide in the **deck**
3. Select that slide and click “Hide Slide” so it won't show during your presentation

A Chicago style citation for images can use *any* of these formats:

Photograph by [creator's name] from [URL] *For example:* Photo by wsilver from <https://ccsearch.creativecommons.org/photos/73d7b905-f5ee-4571-8056-6ccfd4e450cb>

Or:

Image courtesy of [name of the organization] from [URL] *For example:* Image courtesy of wsilver from <https://ccsearch.creativecommons.org/photos/73d7b905-f5ee-4571-8056-6ccfd4e450cb>

Or:

[Title and embedded URL of the Creative-Commons-licensed image] by [creator's name] is licensed under CC BY [license type] *For example:* [More Puppies](#) by wsilver is licensed under CC BY Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Which Graph, Chart, or Visual Should I Use?

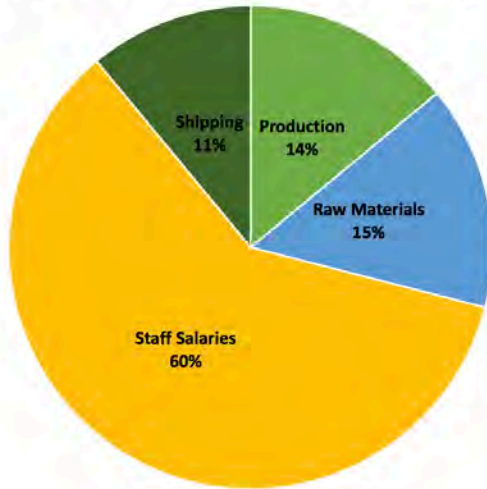
You can easily make charts and graphs for your presentation, using Excel or Google Spreadsheets. Add the data to the spreadsheet, then decide which type of chart or graph to use.

No matter what type you use, always include a title, clear labels, and high-contrast colours that are visible to all users. For example, many people can't see the difference between red and green, so avoid using them together.

Here the most common types:

Pie chart: Shows percentages—portions of a whole. The total segments should add up to 100% or a complete whole. Pie charts are excellent for showing relationships. In the example below we quickly see that Staff Salaries are a huge portion of the company expenses.

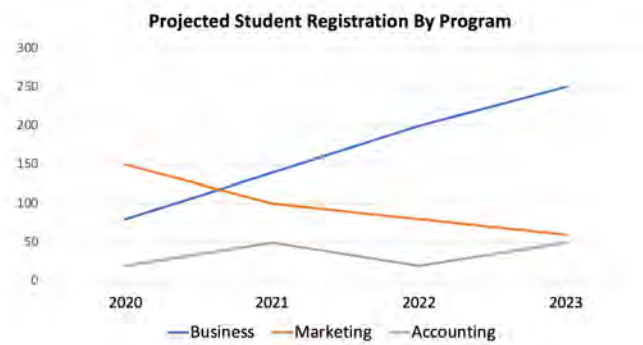
Projected 2021 Company Expenses



Bar graph: Allows comparison between different values, and can show changes over time (if the difference in values is large). The horizontal and vertical axis must always be labelled. This graph shows that the number of Business students is expected to rise, while the number of Marketing students will decrease.



Line graph: Shows a trend or progress over time. They can show small changes over time better than a bar graph. Note that the example below shows the same data used in the chart above, but emphasizes the trend of business registrations growing, marketing registrations declining, and accounting registrations remaining low with a bit of fluctuation. This would be better if you wanted to focus on changes over time.



Heatmap chart: Uses colour to convey the magnitude of certain values. Examples include a risk management heatmap showing low, medium, and high risk based on the likelihood and impact of various outcomes, or an atlas heatmap as displayed below. Because heatmaps depend only on colour—not shape or size—be very careful to use colours that all users can see.



Which chart? An example

Imagine that our team is excited to share the success of our recent marketing campaign to promote bluebell flower sales during the month of March. Here are two ways we might display the data. Look at both and note your response: which one is easier to understand? Which do you prefer to look at?

Example 1

	January	February	March	April
Bluebells	20.4	27.4	90	20.4
Redbells	30.6	38.6	34.6	31.6

Example 2



Example 1 is harder to read because it's not visual. There are lots of percentages, no hierarchy or colour, and the heavy lines compete with the content. It's not easy for the viewer to quickly understand the information. This example also lacks a title or legend (a description of what the data is conveying).

Example 2 shows the same information, but in a way that's easy to quickly understand. This version emphasizes the dramatic success of our marketing campaign, which boosted sales of bluebells during March. Also notice the inclusion of a title, legend, clear axis labels, and colour coding—all of which help the audience's understanding.

Check your Understanding: Presentations

Presentations (Text Version)

1. The first step in creating a presentation is:
 - a. Ensuring you have selected the correct font and font size
 - b. Finding images
 - c. Designing charts and graphs for the slides
 - d. Creating a presentation outline and storyboard
2. Fill in the blanks using the following words:
 - watermarks
 - logos
 - contrast

When considering visual design, you should ensure enough _____ between text and the background. Branding can also be incorporated into the slide design, including font, colour use, and _____. When choosing images, avoid _____, which indicate that the image belongs to someone else.



Image by Lucinda Atwood and Christian Westin, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

3. How could the slide above be improved? (select all that apply)
 - a. Correct the spelling error
 - b. Increase the contrast between the background and text & select a less distracting background
 - c. Use a higher quality image, and enlarge and align it more uniformly
 - d. Reduce the length of text used in the second bullet point
4. True or false: You should use your slides as a script that you can read from during your presentation.
5. When creating slides, the following elements should be considered first:
 - a. Organization, titles & text, visual design, content, and audience experience
 - b. Including as much text as is possible to demonstrate that you've done lots of research
 - c. Using watermarked images
 - d. Spelling, Brevity, Animations, Images

Check your answers ¹

Activity source: "Slides Quiz" by Lucinda Atwood and Christian Westin from "[How to make slides & visuals](#)" In *Business Presentation Skills* by Lucinda Atwood and Christian Westin, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). / Converted into text version.

Attribution & References

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Notes

1.
 1. D
 2. When considering visual design, you should ensure enough **contrast** between text and the background. Branding can also be incorporated into the slide design, including font, colour use, and **logos**. When choosing images, avoid **watermarks**, which indicate that the image belongs to someone else.
 3. A, B, C, D
 4. False. Ideally, your slide text should be minimal, and should convey only your most important key messages. You are then available to convey additional details during your live presentation. Avoiding reading your slides is also important to ensure that you maintain proper eye contact with your audience.
 5. A

PLANNING THE PRESENTATION

To think about a strategy for your presentation, you must move from thinking only about your self to how you will engage with the world outside of you, which, of course, includes your audience and environment.

This section focuses on helping you prepare a presentation strategy by selecting an appropriate *format*, preparing an audience analysis, ensuring your style reflects your authentic personality and strengths, choosing an appropriate tone for the occasion.

Then, after you've selected the appropriate channel, you will begin drafting your presentation, first by considering the general and specific purposes of your presentation and using an outline to map your ideas and strategy.

You'll also learn to consider whether to incorporate backchannels or other technology into your presentation and, finally, you will begin to think about how to develop presentation aids that will support your topic and approach.

At the end of this chapter, you should be armed with a solid strategy for approaching your presentation in a way that is authentically you, balanced with knowing what's in it for your audience while making the most of the environment.

Preparing a Presentation Strategy

Incorporating FAST

You can use the acronym **FAST** to develop your message according to the elements of *format*, *audience*, *style*, and *tone*. When you are working on a presentation, much like in your writing, you will rely on FAST to help you make choices.

FAST Form

FAST Form (Text Version)

Download a copy of the [FAST Form template \[PDF\]](#) to fill out.

- **Format**—What type of document will you use? What are the elements of that document type?
- **Audience**—Who will receive your message? What are their expectations? What's in it for them?

- **Style**—What personality does your writing have? Consider issues like word choice, sentence length and punctuation.
- **Tone**—How do you want your audience to feel about your message? Is your message formal or informal? Positive or negative? Polite? Direct or indirect?

Source: “[Performing a FAST analysis](#)” from *Professional Communications OER* is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

First, you’ll need to think about the **format** of your presentation. This is a choice between presentation types. In your professional life you’ll encounter the verbal communication channels in the following table. The purpose column labels each channel with a purpose (I=Inform, P=Persuade, or E=Entertain) depending on that channel’s most likely purpose.

Presentation Communication Channels

Channel	Direction	Level of Formality	Interaction	Purpose
Speech	One to many	Formal	Low: one-sided	I, P, E
Presentation	One or few to many	Formal	Variable: often includes Q&A	I, P, E
Panel	Few to many	Formal	High: Q&A-based	I, P
Meeting	Group	Informal	High	I, P
Teleconference	Group	Informal	High	I, P
Workshop	One to many	Informal	High: Collaborative	I (Educate)
Webinar	One to many	Formal	Low	I
Podcast	One to many	Formal	Low: Recorded	I, P, E

There are some other considerations to make when you are selecting a **format**. For example, the number of speakers may influence the format you choose. Panels and presentations may have more than one speaker. In meetings and teleconferences, multiple people will converse. In a workshop setting, one person will usually lead the event, but there is often a high level of collaboration between participants.

The location of participants will also influence your decision. For example, if participants cannot all be in the same room, you might choose a **teleconference** or **webinar**. If **asynchronous delivery** (participants access the presentation at different times) is important, you might record a **podcast**. When choosing a technology-reliant channel, such as a teleconference or webinar, be sure to test your equipment and make sure each participant has access to any materials they need before you begin.

When your presentation is for a course assignment, often these issues are specified for you in the

assignment. But if they aren't, you can consider the best format for your topic, content, and audience. Once you have chosen a format, make sure your message is right for your audience. You'll need to think about issues such as the following:

- What expectations will the audience have?
- What is the context of your communication?
- What does the audience already know about the topic?
- How is the audience likely to react to you and your message?

Audience Analysis Form

Audience Analysis Form (Text version)

Download the [AUDIENCE Analysis Form \(Job Aid\) \[PDF\]](#)

- **Analyze**—Who will receive your message?
- **Understand**—What do they already know or understand about your intended message?
- **Demographics**—What is their age, gender, education level, occupation, position?
- **Interest**—What is their level of interest/investment in your message? (What's in it for them?)
- **Environment**—What setting/reality is your audience immersed in and what is your relationship to it? What is their likely attitude to your message? Have you taken cultural differences into consideration?
- **Need**—What information does your audience need? How will they use the information?
- **Customize**—How do you adjust your message to better suit your audience?
- **Expectations**—What does your audience expect from you or your message?

Source: “[Audience Analysis Form](#)” from *Professional Communications OER: Foundations* is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Next, you'll consider the **style** of your presentation. Perhaps you prefer to present formally, limiting your interaction with the audience, or perhaps you prefer a more conversational, informal style, where discussion is a key element. You may prefer to cover serious subjects, or perhaps you enjoy delivering humorous speeches. Style is all about your personality!

Finally, you'll select a **tone** for your presentation. Your voice, body language, level of self-confidence, dress, and use of space all contribute to the mood that your message takes on. Consider how you want your audience to feel when they leave your presentation, and approach it with that mood in mind.

Presentation Purpose

Your presentation will have a general and specific purpose. Your general purpose may be to inform, persuade, or entertain. It's likely that any speech you develop will have a combination of these goals. Most presentations have a little bit of entertainment value, even if they are primarily attempting to inform or persuade. For example, the speaker might begin with a joke or dramatic opening, even though their speech is primarily informational.

Your specific purpose addresses *what* you are going to inform, persuade, or entertain your audience with—the main topic of your speech. Each example below includes two pieces of information: first, the general purpose; second, the specific purpose.

To **inform** the audience about my favourite car, the **Ford Mustang**.

To **persuade** the audience that **global warming is a threat to the environment**.

Timing

Aim to speak for 90 percent of your allotted time so that you have time to answer audience questions at the end (assuming you have allowed for this). If audience questions are not expected, aim for 95 percent. Do not go overtime—audience members may need to be somewhere else immediately following your presentation, and you will feel uncomfortable if they begin to pack up and leave while you are still speaking. Conversely, you don't want to finish too early, as they may feel as if they didn't get their “money's worth.”

To assess the **timing** of your speech as you prepare, you can

- Set a timer while you do a few practice runs, and take an average.
- Run your speech text through an online speech timer.
- Estimate based on the number of words (the average person speaks at about 120 words per minute).

You can improve your chances of hitting your time target when you deliver your speech, by marking your notes with an estimated time at certain points. For example, if your speech starts at 2 p.m., you might mark 2:05 at the start of your notes for the body section, so that you can quickly glance at the clock and make sure you are on target. If you get there more quickly, consciously try to pause more often or speak more slowly, or speed up a little if you are pressed for time. If you have to adjust your timing as you are delivering the speech, do so gradually. It will be jarring to the audience if you start out speaking at a moderate pace, then suddenly realize you are going to run out of time and switch to rapid-fire delivery!

Incorporating Backchannels

Have you ever been to a conference where speakers asked for audience questions via social media? Perhaps one of your teachers at school has used Twitter for student comments and questions, or has asked you to vote on an issue through an online poll. Technology has given speakers new ways to engage with an audience in real time, and these can be particularly useful when it isn't practical for the audience to share their thoughts verbally—for example, when the audience is very large, or when they are not all in the same location.

These secondary or additional means of interacting with your audience are called **backchannels**, and you might decide to incorporate one into your presentation, depending on your aims. They can be helpful for engaging more introverted members of the audience who may not be comfortable speaking out verbally in a large group. Using publicly accessible social networks, such as a Facebook Page or Twitter feed, can also help to spread your message to a wider audience, as audience members share posts related to your speech with their networks. Because of this, backchannels are often incorporated into conferences; they are helpful in marketing the conference and its speakers both during and after the event.

There are some caveats involved in using these backchannels, though. If, for example, you ask your audience to submit their questions via Twitter, you'll need to choose a hashtag for them to append to the messages so that you can easily find them. You'll also need to have an assistant who will sort and choose the audience questions for you to answer. It is much too distracting for the speaker to do this on their own during the presentation. You could, however, respond to audience questions and comments after the presentation via social media, gaining the benefits of both written and verbal channels to spread your message.

Developing the Content

Creating an Outline

As with any type of messaging, it helps if you create an outline of your speech or presentation before you create it fully. This ensures that each element is in the right place and gives you a place to start to avoid the dreaded blank page. Here is an outline template that you can adapt for your purpose. Replace the placeholders in the *content* column with your ideas or points, then make some notes in the *verbal and visual delivery* column about how you will support or emphasize these points using the techniques we've discussed. This outline is appropriate for a presentation meant to inform or persuade. You'll note this is similar to an outline for a research paper.

Presentation Outline

Section	Content	Verbal and Visual Delivery
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention-grabber • Main idea • Common ground 	
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I. Main idea: Point 1 • Sub-point 1 • A.1 specific information 1 • A.2 specific information 2 • II. Main idea: Point 2 • Sub-point 1 • B.1 specific information 1 • B.2 specific information 2 • III. Main idea: Point 3 • Sub-point 1 • C.1 specific information 1 • C.2 specific information 2 	
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of main points 1–3 • Residual message/call-to-action 	

Introduction

The beginning of your speech needs an **attention-grabber** to get your audience interested right away. Choose your attention-grabbing device based on what works best for your topic. Your entire introduction should be only around 10 to 15 percent of your total speech, so be sure to keep this section short. Here are some devices that you could try for attention-grabbers:

Examples of Attention Grabbers

Attention Grabber	Purpose	Examples
Subject statement	A subject statement is to the point, but not the most interesting choice.	We are surrounded by statistical information in today's world, so understanding statistics is becoming paramount to citizenship in the twenty-first century.
Audience reference	An audience reference highlights something common to the audience that will make them interested in the topic.	As human resource professionals, you and I know the importance of talent management. In today's competitive world, we need to invest in getting and keeping the best talent for our organizations to succeed.
Quotation	Share wise words of another person. You can find quotations online that cover just about any topic.	Oliver Goldsmith, a sixteenth-century writer, poet, and physician, once noted that "the true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them."
Current event	Refer to a current event in the news that demonstrates the relevance of your topic to the audience.	On January 10, 2007, Scott Anthony Gomez Jr. and a fellow inmate escaped from a Pueblo, Colorado, jail. During their escape the duo attempted to rappel from the roof of the jail using a makeshift ladder of bed sheets. During Gomez's attempt to scale the building, he slipped, fell 40 feet, and injured his back. After being quickly apprehended, Gomez filed a lawsuit against the jail for making it too easy for him to escape.
Historical event	Compare or contrast your topic with an occasion in history.	During the 1960s and '70s, the United States intervened in the civil strife between North and South Vietnam. The result was a long-running war of attrition in which many American lives were lost and the country of Vietnam suffered tremendous damage and destruction. We saw a similar war waged in Iraq. American lives were lost, and stability has not yet returned to the region.
Anecdote, parable, or fable	An anecdote is a brief account or story of an interesting or humorous event, while a parable or fable is a symbolic tale designed to teach a life lesson.	In July 2009, a high school girl named Alexa Longueira was walking along a main boulevard near her home on Staten Island, New York, typing in a message on her cell phone. Not paying attention to the world around her, she took a step and fell right into an open manhole (Witney, 2009). The ancient Greek writer Aesop told a fable about a boy who put his hand into a pitcher of filberts. The boy grabbed as many of the delicious nuts as he possibly could. But when he tried to pull them out, his hand wouldn't fit through the neck of the pitcher because he was grasping so many filberts. Instead of dropping some of them so that his hand would fit, he burst into tears and cried about his predicament. The moral of the story? "Don't try to do too much at once" (Aesop, 1881).

Surprising statement	A strange fact or statistic related to your topic that startles your audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Boeing 747 airliner holds 57,285 gallons of fuel. • The average person has over 1,460 dreams a year. • There are no clocks in any casinos in Las Vegas. • In 2000, Pope John Paul II became the most famous honorary member of the Harlem Globetrotters.
Question	You could ask either a question that asks for a response from your audience, or a rhetorical question, which does not need a response but is designed to get them thinking about the topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise your hand if you have ever thought about backpacking in Europe. • If you prick us, do we not bleed? (Shakespeare, <i>Merchant of Venice</i>)
Humour	A joke or humorous quotation can work well, but to use humour you need to be sure that your audience will find the comment funny. You run the risk of insulting members of the audience, or leaving them puzzled if they don't get the joke, so test it out on someone else first!	<p>“The only thing that stops God from sending another flood is that the first one was useless.” —Nicolas Chamfort, sixteenth-century French author</p>
Personal reference	Refer to a story about yourself that is relevant to the topic.	<p>In the fall of 2008, I decided that it was time that I took my life into my own hands. After suffering for years with the disease of obesity, I decided to take a leap of faith and get a gastric bypass in an attempt to finally beat the disease.</p>
Occasion reference	This device is only relevant if your speech is occasion-specific, for example, a toast at a wedding, a ceremonial speech, or a graduation commencement.	<p>Today we are here to celebrate the wedding of two wonderful people.</p>

The above provides several options for attention-grabbers, but remember you likely only need one. After the attention-getter comes the rest of your introduction. It needs to do the following:

- Capture the audience's interest
- State the purpose of your speech
- Establish credibility
- Give the audience a reason to listen
- Signpost the main ideas

Body

For post-secondary students, your class presentation is likely to fulfill an assignment such as presenting the findings of a research paper or summarizing a class unit. It is important to realize that your presentation does

not need to include *all* of your information. In fact, it is unwise (and very boring) to read your whole research paper in your presentation. Choose the important and interesting things to highlight in your presentation.

Your audience will think to themselves, *Why should I listen to this speech? What's in it for me?* One of the best things you can do as a speaker is to answer these questions early in your body, if you haven't already done so in your introduction. This will serve to gain their support early and will fill in the blanks of *who, what, when, where, why, and how* in their minds.

You can use the outline to organize your topics. Gather the general ideas you want to convey. There is often more than one way to organize a speech. Some of your points could be left out, and others developed more fully, depending on the purpose and audience. You will refine this information until you have the number of main points you need. Ensure that they are distinct, and balance the content of your speech so that you spend roughly the same amount of time addressing each. Make sure to use parallel structure to make sure each of your main points is phrased in the same way. The last thing to do when working on your body is to make sure your points are in a logical order, so that your ideas flow naturally from one to the next.

Practical Examples

Depending on the topic, it is often useful to use practical examples to demonstrate your point. If your presentation is about the impacts of global warming, for example, it would be wise to mention some familiar natural disasters that are linked to global warming. If your presentation is about how to do a good presentation, you could mention several specific examples of things that could go wrong if the presenter isn't organized. These practical examples help the audience relate the content to real life and understand it better.

Using Humour

If appropriate, using humour in the presentation is often a welcome diversion from a serious topic. It lightens the mood, often helps relieve anxiety, and creates engagement with the audience. It needs to be used sparingly and tastefully. Humour is often an area that can offend, so run your ideas past others before incorporating it into your presentation.

Presentation Conclusion

You will want to conclude your presentation on a high note. You'll need to keep your energy up until the very end of your speech. In your conclusion, you will want to reiterate the main points of your presentation. This will help to tie together the concepts for your audience. It will also help them realize you are wrapping it up. It is often a good idea to leave them with a final thought or call to action, depending on the general purpose of your message. Lastly, remember to be clear that it is the end of your presentation. Don't end it by throwing one last piece of information or it will seem like you've left it hanging. End with a general statement about the

topic or a thought to ponder. Ending with “thank you” also lets them know it’s the end. Once you have completed your question, you can invite questions and comments from the audience if appropriate.

In this section you considered the importance of FAST and AUDIENCE tools in helping to lay out a strategy that incorporates your own understanding with the needs of the audience. You learned about how to use an outline to stay organized and keep track of your ideas, as well as general and specific purposes. You learned the importance of sustaining your audience’s attention throughout the presentation with key approaches you can take as you write your introduction, body, and conclusion. You should now be prepared to take your strategy to the next level by ensuring you next consider whether and how to incorporate high-quality presentation aids.

Check Your Understanding: Presentation Planning

1. You have been asked to present the pros and cons of living in student residence which will be followed by a group discussion with your classmates. The general purpose and approach you should use is:
 - a. To entertain
 - b. To inform
 - c. To persuade
 - d. To terrify
2. Why should you consider timing when preparing for a presentation?
 - a. To avoid running out of time and having to cut short important content
 - b. To make sure that the rate at which you speak gives the desired effect
 - c. To make sure you have correctly timed technological elements such as slides
 - d. All of the above
 - e. Only (a) & (c)
3. The three main general purposes of speaking are to:
 - a. Entertain, persuade, and debate
 - b. Persuade, inform, and perpetuate
 - c. Celebrate, perpetuate, and inform

- d. Inform, persuade, and entertain
 - e. Deliberative, epideictic, and forensic
4. If you are delivering a presentation without any additional assistance and would like to make use of backchannels, an effective strategy would be:
- a. Have an extra laptop available so you can keep track of comments as they come in
 - b. At natural breaks in the presentation, minimize your other visual aids and display the comment feed
 - c. Wait until after the presentation to view the comments and reply to questions via the backchannel
 - d. Select a person in the room to monitor the backchannel and cue you into questions
5. A successful introduction should:
- a. Establish your credibility
 - b. Explain the relevance of your topic to your audience
 - c. Lay out a simple map of your speech
 - d. All of the above
6. Which of the following best describes the role of a conclusion in a speech?
- a. To help the audience remember the primary message from the speech
 - b. To summarize the main points of the speech
 - c. To lead into a Q&A session
 - d. All of the above
 - e. Only (a) & (b)
7. You have been invited to speak to the Student Association on ways to avoid spreading germs in the college. Which of the following would be the most effective way to get their attention at the beginning of your speech or presentation?
- a. Pretend to sneeze into your hands several times as you walk up to a student. Then wipe the back of that hand across your nose before extending it to the student for a handshake.
 - b. Ask them “How many of you like catching colds?”
 - c. Tell a story about the time you got to skip school for a week because you caught a bad cold.
 - d. Provide data that show two percent of all colds progress to life-threatening conditions

like pneumonia or pleurisy.

8. Which of the following principles of outline creation is INCORRECT?
 - a. Your outline should include all the details of your presentation.
 - b. Your outline should show your plan for an introduction, body, and conclusion.
 - c. Your outline should show that you adequately supported your main points.
 - d. Your outline should show that you have presented similar ideas in parallel ways.

9. Which of the following is NOT a function shared by BOTH the introduction and the conclusion of a speech?
 - a. Identify the main points
 - b. Get the audience's attention
 - c. Make the topic important to the audience
 - d. Present the speech's thesis

Summary

In this module, you were introduced to the basics of presentations and explored a variety of presentation formats. You read and watched videos exploring the importance of the author's main message, persuasive techniques, and the audience in planning presentations.

Attribution & References

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CREATING PRESENTATIONS

Introduction

In this module, you will learn the other side of the presentation: the actual presentation. As you progress through this module, you will acquire the essential skills necessary to captivate your audience, communicate with confidence, and leave a lasting impression. Having honed your preparation skills, you will learn the nuances of rehearsals, discover key practices including significance of dressing comfortably and professionally. Enhancing your presentations using various visual aids is a cornerstone of effective communication. Whether it be handouts, whiteboard drawings, PowerPoint slides, memes, or short video clips, you will explore a multitude of visual aid options. By strategically selecting and incorporating these aids, you will provide references, illustrations, and images that bolster your audience's understanding and aid in their retention of your key points.

Addressing anxiety is an integral part of successful presentation delivery. You will discover effective approaches to manage anxiety, ranging from coping with your body's reactions to handling unexpected surprises or mistakes that may arise during your speech or due to external distractions. By mastering these techniques, your confidence will increase allowing your message to shine through. You will also learn how to read audience cues, so you can tailor your delivery to their needs by developing your skills to be able to critically reflect and analyze your own presentation delivery through self-analysis. This skill will give you the power to receive constructive verbal and non-verbal feedback, developing your ability to continuously improve and refine your presentation skills.

Learning Objectives

- Acquire essential skills to captivate your audience to leave a lasting impression.
- Apply presentation skills to give an audience-forward message using multi visual aids.
- Identify the benefits of rehearsing a presentation in advance.
- Apply strategies for reducing anxiety about public speaking.
- Implement a self-reflective process to receive and implement improvements.
- Describe the purpose and structure of a reading reflection and experiential assignment.

To Do List

- Read “Delivery” in *Student Success*.

- Read “Giving Presentations” in *Writing for Success*.
- Complete Video Essay Presentation Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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GIVING A PRESENTATION

By this time, you have already completed much of the preparation for your presentation. You have organized your ideas and planned both the textual and visual components of your presentation. Still, you may not feel quite ready to speak in front of a group.

Public speaking is stressful. In fact, some researchers have found that a large percentage of people surveyed rate public speaking as their number one fear. Most people feel at least a little bit nervous at the prospect of public speaking.

At the same time, it is an increasingly necessary skill in the workplace. A human resource manager presents company policies and benefits plans to large groups of employees. An entrepreneur presents the idea for a new business to potential investors. A nurse might chair a staff meeting to introduce new hospital procedures. A police officer might present crime-prevention tips at a community meeting. In some fields, such as training and teaching, speaking in public is a regular job requirement.

In this section, you will learn strategies for becoming a confident, effective speaker. You have already taken the major steps toward making your presentation successful, as a result of the content planning you did in the previous chapters. Now, it is time to plan and practice your delivery.

What Makes a Speaker Effective?

Think about times you have been part of the audience for a speech, lecture, or other presentation. You have probably noticed how certain traits and mannerisms work to engage you and make the experience enjoyable. Effective speakers project confidence and interest in both their audience and their subject matter. They present ideas clearly and come across as relaxed but in control.

In contrast, less effective speakers may seem anxious or, worse, apathetic. They may be difficult to hear or understand, or their body language may distract from their message. They have trouble making a connection with their audience. This can happen even when the speaker knows his or her material and has prepared effective visual aids.

In both cases, two factors contribute to your overall impression of the speaker: voice and body language. The following sections discuss specific points to focus on.

Finding Your Voice

Most people do not think much about how their voices come across in everyday conversations. Talking to

other people feels natural. Unfortunately, speaking in public does not, and that can affect your voice. For instance, many people talk faster when they give presentations, because they are nervous and want to finish quickly. In addition, some traits that do not matter too much in ordinary conversation, such as a tendency to speak quietly, can be a problem when speaking to a group. Think about the characteristics discussed in the following section and how your own voice might come across.

Resonance

One quality of a good speaking voice is resonance, meaning strength, depth, and force. This word is related to the word *resonate*. Resonant speech begins at the speaker's vocal cords and resonates throughout the upper body. The speaker does not simply use his or her mouth to form words, but instead projects from the lungs and chest. (That is why having a cold can make it hard to speak clearly.)

Some people happen to have powerful, resonant voices. But even if your voice is naturally softer or higher pitched, you can improve it with practice.

- Take a few deep breaths before you begin rehearsing.
- Hum a few times, gradually lowering the pitch so that you feel the vibration not only in your throat but also in your chest and diaphragm.
- Try to be conscious of that vibration and of your breathing while you speak. You may not feel the vibration as intensely, but you should feel your speech resonate in your upper body, and you should feel as though you are breathing easily.
- Keep practicing until it feels natural.

Enunciation

Enunciation refers to how clearly you articulate words while speaking. Try to pronounce words as clearly and accurately as you can, enunciating each syllable. Avoid mumbling or slurring words. As you rehearse your presentation, practice speaking a little more slowly and deliberately. Ask someone you know to give you feedback.

Volume

Volume is simply how loudly or softly you speak. Shyness, nervousness, or overenthusiasm can cause people to speak too softly or too loudly, which may make the audience feel frustrated or put off. Here are some tips for managing volume effectively:

- Afraid of being too loud, many people speak too quietly. As a rule, aim to use a slightly louder volume

for public speaking than you use in conversation.

- Consider whether you might be an exception to the rule. If you know you tend to be loud, you might be better off using your normal voice or dialing back a bit.
- Think about volume in relation to content. Main points should usually be delivered with more volume and force. However, lowering your voice at crucial points can also help draw in your audience or emphasize serious content.

Pitch

Pitch refers to how high or low a speaker's voice is. The overall pitch of people's voices varies among individuals. We also naturally vary our pitch when speaking. For instance, our pitch gets higher when we ask a question and often when we express excitement. It often gets lower when we give a command or want to convey seriousness.

A voice that does not vary in pitch sounds monotonous, like a musician playing the same note repeatedly. Keep these tips in mind to manage pitch:

- Pitch, like volume, should vary with your content. Evaluate your voice to make sure you are not speaking at the same pitch throughout your presentation.
- It is fine to raise your pitch slightly at the end of a sentence when you ask a question. However, some speakers do this for every sentence, and as a result, they come across as tentative and unsure. Notice places where your pitch rises, and make sure the change is appropriate to the content.
- Lower your pitch when you want to convey authority. But do not overdo it. Questions should sound different from statements and commands.
- Chances are, your overall pitch falls within a typical range. However, if your voice is very high or low, consciously try to lower or raise it slightly.

Pace

Pace is the speed or rate at which you speak. Speaking too fast makes it hard for an audience to follow the presentation. The audience may become impatient.

Many less experienced speakers tend to talk faster when giving a presentation because they are nervous, want to get the presentation over with, or fear that they will run out of time. If you find yourself rushing during your rehearsals, try these strategies:

- Take a few deep breaths before you speak. Make sure you are not forgetting to breathe during your presentation.
- Identify places where a brief, strategic pause is appropriate—for instance, when transitioning from one

main point to the next. Build these pauses into your presentation.

- If you still find yourself rushing, you may need to edit your presentation content to ensure that you stay within the allotted time.

If, on the other hand, your pace seems sluggish, you will need to liven things up. A slow pace may stem from uncertainty about your content. If that is the case, additional practice should help you. It also helps to break down how much time you plan to spend on each part of the presentation and then make sure you are adhering to your plan.

Tip

Pace affects not only your physical presentation but also the point of view; slowing down the presentation may allow your audience to further comprehend and consider your topic. Pace may also refer to the rate at which PowerPoint slides appear. If either the slide or the animation on the slide automatically appears, make sure the audience has adequate time to read the information or view the animation before the presentation continues.

Tone

Tone is the emotion you convey when speaking—excitement, annoyance, nervousness, lightheartedness, and so forth. Various factors, such as volume, pitch, and body language, affect how your tone comes across to your audience.

Before you begin rehearsing your presentation, think about what tone is appropriate for the content. Should you sound forceful, concerned, or matter-of-fact? Are there places in your presentation where a more humorous or more serious tone is appropriate? Think about the tone you should project, and practice setting that tone.

Check Your Understanding: Oral Delivery

1. Set up a microphone to record yourself. (You may use a webcam if you wish.) For this

- exercise, assess yourself on your verbal delivery only, not your body language.)
2. Rehearse and record your presentation.
 3. Replay the recording and assess yourself using the following criteria: resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone. Rate yourself from one to five on each criterion, with five being the highest rating. Determine which areas are strengths and which areas you need to improve.
 4. If you wish, ask another person to evaluate your presentation.

The Power of Body Language

The nonverbal content of a presentation is just as important as the verbal delivery. A person's body language—eye contact, facial expressions, posture, gestures, and movement—communicates a powerful message to an audience before any words are spoken.

People interpret and respond to each other's body language instinctively. When you talk to someone, you notice whether the other person is leaning forward or hanging back, nodding in agreement or disagreement, looking at you attentively or looking away. If your listener slouches, fidgets, or stares into space, you interpret these nonverbal cues as signs of discomfort or boredom. In everyday conversations, people often communicate through body language without giving it much conscious thought. Mastering this aspect of communication is a little more challenging, however, when you are giving a presentation. As a speaker, you are onstage. It is not easy to see yourself as your audience sees you.

Think about times you have been part of a speaker's audience. You have probably seen some presenters who seemed to own the room, projecting confidence and energy and easily connecting with the audience. Other presenters may have come across as nervous, gloomy, or disengaged. How did body language make a difference?

Three factors work together powerfully to convey a nonverbal message: eye contact, posture, and movement.

Eye Contact and Facial Expressions

“Maintain eye contact” is a common piece of public-speaking advice—so common it may sound elementary and cliché. Why is that simple piece of advice so hard to follow?

Maintaining eye contact may not be as simple as it sounds. In everyday conversation, people establish eye contact but then look away from time to time, because staring into someone's eyes continuously feels

uncomfortably intense. Two or three people conversing can establish a comfortable pattern of eye contact. But how do you manage that when you are addressing a group?

The trick is to focus on one person at a time. Zero in on one person, make eye contact, and maintain it just long enough to establish a connection. (A few seconds will suffice.) Then move on. This way, you connect with your audience, one person at a time. As you proceed, you may find that some people hold your gaze and others look away quickly. That is fine, as long as you connect with people in different parts of the room.

Pay attention to your facial expressions as well. If you have thought about how you want to convey emotion during different parts of your presentation, you are probably already monitoring your facial expressions as you rehearse. Be aware that the pressure of presenting can make your expression serious or tense without your realizing it.

Tip

If you are speaking to a very large group, it may be difficult to make eye contact with each individual. Instead, focus on a smaller group of persons or one row of people at time. Look in their direction for a few seconds and then shift your gaze to another small group in the room.

Posture

While eye contact establishes a connection with your audience, your posture establishes your confidence. Stand straight and tall with your head held high to project confidence and authority. Slouching or drooping, on the other hand, conveys timidity, uncertainty, or lack of interest in your own presentation.

It will not seem natural, but practice your posture in front of a mirror. Take a deep breath and let it out. Stand upright and imagine a straight line running from your shoulders to your hips to your feet. Rock back and forth slightly on the balls of your feet until your weight feels balanced. You should not be leaning forward, backward, or to either side. Let your arms and hands hang loosely at your sides, relaxed but not limp. Then lift your chin slightly and look into your own eyes. Do you feel more confident?

You might not just yet. In fact, you may feel overly self-conscious or downright silly. In time, however, maintaining good posture will come more naturally, and it will improve your effectiveness as a speaker.

Tip

Nervousness affects posture. When feeling tense, people often hunch up their shoulders without realizing it. (Doing so just makes them feel even tenser and may inhibit breathing, which can affect

your delivery.) As you rehearse, relax your shoulders so they are not hunched forward or pushed back unnaturally far. Stand straight but not rigid. Do not try to suck in your stomach or push out your chest unnaturally. You do not need to stand like a military officer, just a more confident version of yourself.

Movement and Gestures

The final piece of body language that helps tie your presentation together is your use of gestures and movement. A speaker who barely moves may come across as wooden or lacking energy and emotion. Excessive movement and gestures, on the other hand, are distracting. Strive for balance.

A little movement can do a lot to help you connect with your audience and add energy to your presentation. Try stepping forward toward your audience at key moments where you really want to establish that personal connection. Consider where you might use gestures such as pointing, holding up your hand, or moving your hands for emphasis. Avoid putting your hands in your pockets or clasping them in front of or behind you.

Writing at Work

When you give a presentation at work, wearing the right outfit can help you feel more poised and confident. The right attire can also help you avoid making distracting gestures. While you talk, you do not want to be tugging on necktie tied too tight or wobbling on flimsy high-heeled shoes. Choose clothing that is appropriately professional and comfortable.

Check Your Understanding: Body Language

In this exercise, present the same oral presentation from Check Your Understanding: Oral Delivery but this time, evaluate your body language.

1. Set up a video camera to record yourself, or ask someone else to evaluate you.
2. Rehearse and, if applicable, record your presentation.

3. Replay the recording and assess yourself (or have your companion assess you) on the following criteria: eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures. Rate yourself from one to five on each criterion, with five being the highest rating. Determine in which areas you have strength and in which areas you need to improve.

Rehearsing Your Presentation and Making Final Preparations

Practice is essential if you want your presentation to be effective. Speaking in front of a group is a complicated task because there are so many components to stay on top of—your words, your visual aids, your voice, and your body language. If you are new to public speaking, the task can feel like juggling eggs while riding a unicycle. With experience, it gets easier, but even experienced speakers benefit from practice.

Take the time to rehearse your presentation more than once. Each time you go through it, pick another element to refine. For instance, once you are comfortable with the overall verbal content, work on integrating your visuals. Then focus on your vocal delivery and your body language. Multiple practice sessions will help you integrate all of these components into a smooth, effective presentation.

Practice in front of another person (or a small group) at least once. Practicing with a test audience will help you grow accustomed to interacting with other people as you talk, and it will give you a chance to get feedback from someone else's perspective. Your audience can help you identify areas to improve.

Just as important as identifying areas for improvement, your audience can encourage you not to be too hard on yourself. When preparing for an oral presentation, many people are their own worst critics. They are hyperconscious of any flaws in their presentation, real or imagined. A test audience can provide honest feedback from a neutral observer who can provide support and constructive critique.

Managing Your Environment

Part of being a good presenter is managing your environment effectively. Your environment may be the space, the sound levels, and any tools or equipment you will use. Take these factors into account as you rehearse. Consider the following questions:

- Will you have enough space to move around in? Consider whether you might need to rearrange chairs or tables in the room in advance.
- Do you have enough space to display your visual aids? If you are using slides, where will you project the

images?

- Will the lighting in the room need to be adjusted for your presentation? If so, where are the light switches located? How are window coverings opened or closed?
- Will your audience be able to hear you? Does the environment have any distracting noises, such as heating or cooling vents, outside traffic, or noisy equipment or machines? If so, how can you minimize the problem? Will you need a microphone?
- Do you have access to any technical equipment you need, such as a laptop computer, a projector, or a CD or DVD player? Are electrical outlets conveniently placed and functional?

You may not be able to control every aspect of the environment to your liking. However, by thinking ahead, you can make the best of the space you have to work in. If you have a chance to rehearse in that environment, do so.

Engaging Your Audience: Planning a Question-and-Answer Session

Rehearsing your presentation will help you feel confident and in control. The most effective presenters do not simply rehearse the content they will deliver. They also think about how they will interact with their audience and respond effectively to audience input.

An effective way to interact is to plan a brief question-and-answer (Q&A) session to follow your presentation. Set aside a few minutes of your allotted time to address audience questions. Plan ahead. Try to anticipate what questions your audience might have, so you can be prepared to answer them. You probably will not have enough time to cover everything you know about the topic in your presentation. A Q&A session can give you an opportunity to fill in any gaps for your audience.

Finally, accept that interacting with your audience means going with the flow and giving up a little of your control. If someone asks a question you were not anticipating and cannot answer, simply admit you do not know and make a note to follow up.

Writing at Work

Increasingly, employees need to manage a virtual environment when giving presentations in the workplace. You might need to conduct a webinar, a live presentation, meeting, workshop, or lecture delivered over the web; run an online Q&A chat session; or coordinate a conference call involving multiple time zones.

Preparation and rehearsal can help ensure that a virtual presentation goes smoothly. Complete a test run of any software you will use. Ask a coworker to assist you to ensure that both you and the audience have all the tools needed and that the tools are in working order. Make sure you have contact information for all the key meeting attendees. Finally, know whom to call if something goes wrong, and have a backup plan.

Check Your Understanding: Presenting and Providing a Q&A Session

If you have not yet rehearsed in front of an audience, now is the time. Ask a peer (or a small group of people) to observe your presentation, provide a question-and-answer session, and have your audience provide feedback on the following:

- The overall quality of your content (clarity, organization, level of detail)
- The effectiveness of your visual aids
- Your vocal delivery (resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone)
- The effectiveness of your body language (eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures)
- Your response to questions the audience posed during the question-and-answer session

Use your audience's feedback to make any final adjustments to your presentation. For example, could you clarify your presentation to reduce the number of questions—or enhance the quality of the questions—the audience asked during the question-and-answer session?

Coping with Public-Speaking Anxiety

The tips in this chapter should help you reduce any nervousness you may feel about public speaking. Although most people are a little anxious about talking to a group, the task usually becomes less intimidating with experience and practice.

Preparation and practice are the best defenses against public-speaking anxiety. If you have made a serious

effort to prepare and rehearse, you can be confident that your efforts will pay off. If you still feel shaky, try the following strategies:

- Take care of your health. In the days leading up to your presentation, make sure you get plenty of sleep and eat right. Exercise to help cope with tension. Avoid caffeine if it makes you jittery.
- Use relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, and stretching to help you feel calm and focused on the day of your presentation.
- Visualize yourself giving a successful presentation. Image yourself succeeding. It will make you feel more confident.
- Put things into perspective. What is the worst that could happen if anything went wrong? Many people have given less-than-perfect presentations and lived to tell about it! Of course, you should make your best effort, but if something does go wrong, you can use it as a learning experience.
- Understand that you may not be able to overcome your nervousness completely. Feeling a little anxious can help you stay alert and focused. If you do not feel confident, try to “fake it until you make it.”

Check Your Understanding: Coping with Public-Speaking Anxiety

To practice overcoming public-speaking anxiety, ask a family member, coworker, or peer to view a rehearsal of the presentation. Schedule the rehearsal at a time that works for you, and plan to get plenty of rest the night before. After the presentation, answer the following questions.

1. When did you feel most nervous during the presentation? Make a note on your outline of the most nervous moments. Next to this note, add one strategy that may ease your anxiety. For example, you could add a reminder to relax, such as, “Take a deep breath here!” or a few words of encouragement, such as, “You are doing a great job!”
2. Ask your rehearsal audience for feedback on which moments of the presentation seemed most nerve wrecking for you. What nonverbal or verbal clues indicated to your audience that you were nervous? Which were most distracting to the audience? Make a note of these clues and practice the presentation again; be aware of how you show your anxiety and try to lessen these distractions.

Watch It: Digital Presentations

Giving a Presentation (Text Version)

Watch the following videos to learn more about creating a digital presentation:

[Watch Microsoft PowerPoint for beginners – Complete course \(52 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch How to use free Windows 10 video editor \(28 minutes\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch ScreenPal tutorial for beginners \(5 mins\) on YouTube](#)

[Watch Students: Getting started with Flipgrid \(45 seconds\) on YouTube](#)

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Check Your Understanding: Information Presentation

For your assignment go to Blackboard and review the instructions for information presentation.

Attribution & References

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DELIVERING THE PRESENTATION

Preparing to Present

Rehearsing

To deliver your presentation to the best of your ability, and to reduce your nerves once you take the stage, you need to practise by **rehearsing**. As you do, try to identify the weaknesses in your delivery to improve on them. For example, do you often mis-speak the same words (e.g., *pacific* for *specific*; *axe* for *ask*) or do your hands or feet fidget? Use your practice time to focus on correcting these issues. These sessions should help you get comfortable and help you remember what you want to say without having to constantly refer to notes.

Try practising in front of a mirror, or even recording yourself speaking to a camera and playing it back. It's also helpful to get feedback from a supportive audience at this stage. Perhaps a few family members or friends could watch you give your presentation and provide some feedback.

If at all possible, access the room where you will be presenting. This way you can get a feel for its setup and decide how you will stand or move during your presentation.

Dress for Success

While there are no definitive guidelines for how you should dress for your presentation, your appearance is an important part of your audience's first impression. If you want them to take you seriously, you'll need to look the part. While you don't have to wear a suit each time you present, there are some scenarios where this would be expected; for example, if you are presenting to a corporate audience who wear suits to work, you should do the same. You should dress one step above your audience. If your audience is going to be dressed casually in shorts and jeans, then wear nice casual clothing such as a pair of pressed slacks and a collared shirt or blouse. If your audience is going to be wearing business casual attire, then you should wear a dress or a suit. If you are presenting to your instructor and classmates, dress better than you normally would in class, to demonstrate you are taking this seriously and you are adding a level of formality.

Another general rule is to avoid distractions in your appearance. Clothing with loud colours and bold patterns, overly tight or revealing garments, or big jangling jewellery can distract your audience's attention from your message.

Setting Up Your Environment

Depending on the circumstances of your speech or presentation, you may have some choices to make about the environment. Perhaps you have a choice of meeting rooms that you can use, or perhaps you have only one option.

If you have some flexibility, it is helpful to think about what sort of environment would best help you get your message across. For example, if you are running a workshop, you might want to assemble participants in a circle to encourage collaboration and discussion. If you are holding a webinar, you'll need a quiet location with a strong internet connection and a computer system. It is imperative that you think about what facilities you need well before the day of your presentation arrives. You may have to book equipment or classrooms. Arriving to find that the equipment you expected isn't available is not a nice surprise for even the most experienced speaker!

If you have access to the location beforehand, you may need to move tables or chairs around to get things just the way you want them. You might choose to have a **podium** brought in, if you are aiming for a formal feel, for example, or you may need to position your flip chart. Double check that you have all the equipment you need, from whiteboard markers to speakers. It is far better if you can get comfortable with the room before your audience arrives, as this will make you feel more prepared and less nervous.

If you are using technology to support your presentation (i.e., PowerPoint slides or a projector), test everything before you begin. Do a **microphone check** and test its volume, view your slides on the computer you will be using, check any web links, play videos to test their sound, or make a call to test the phone connection prior to your teleconference. Your audience will get restless quickly if they arrive and are expected to wait while you fix a technical problem. This will also make you seem disorganized and hurt your credibility as an authoritative speaker.

Contingency Planning

Well before the day of your presentation, ask yourself, *What could go wrong?* This might sound like a way for a novice presenter to stress oneself out, but it can actually be very helpful. If you anticipate the worst-case scenario and are prepared for it, problems on the day of your presentation are less likely to bother you.

Many of the possible problems can be avoided with **preparation**. Make sure you have notes with you in case you need them. Dress professionally so that you feel good about how you are presenting yourself. Getting there early to set up and test the equipment will prevent many technical issues, but having a handout with you will make you feel even more comfortable in case you have problems with your slides. Bring a bottle of water in case your throat becomes dry or you need a moment to pause.

Most other problems can be prevented with practice. Rehearse so that you are not reliant on your notes. This way, if a note card goes missing, it's no big deal. During your rehearsals you'll get used to pacing yourself,

pausing for breath, and monitoring the timing of your speech so that this comes more naturally once you get onstage.

During the Presentation

Managing Anxiety

Studies show that presenters' nervousness usually peaks at the anticipation stage that occurs one minute before the presentation. They further found that as the speech progresses, **nervousness** tends to go down. Here are some things you can do to help you manage your anxiety before the presentation:

- Practice/rehearse in similar conditions/setting as your speech
- Be organized
- Think positively
- Analyze your audience
- Adapt your language to speaking style



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During the presentation itself, there are four main areas where you can focus attention in order to manage your anxiety:

1. Your body's reaction
2. Attention to the audience
3. Keeping a sense of humour
4. Common stress management techniques

Your Body's Reaction

Physical movement helps to channel some of the excess energy that your body produces in response to anxiety. If at all possible, move around the front of the room rather than remaining imprisoned behind the **lectern** or gripping it for dear life (avoid pacing nervously from side to side, however). Move closer to the audience and then stop for a moment. If you are afraid that moving away from the lectern will reveal your shaking hands, use note cards rather than a sheet of paper for your outline. Note cards do not quiver like paper, and they provide you with something to do with your hands. Other options include **vocal warm-ups** right before your speech, having water (preferably in a non-spillable bottle with a spout) nearby for a dry mouth, and doing a few stretches before going on stage.

Deep breathing will help to counteract the effects of excess adrenaline. You can place cues or symbols in your notes, such as “slow down” or ☺, that remind you to pause and breathe during points in your speech. It is also a good idea to pause a moment before you get started, to set an appropriate pace from the onset. Look at your audience and smile. It is a reflex for some of your audience members to smile back. Those smiles will reassure you that your audience members are friendly.

Attention to the Audience

During your speech, make a point of establishing direct **eye contact** with your audience members. By looking at individuals, you establish a series of one-to-one contacts similar to interpersonal communication. An audience becomes much less threatening when you think of them not as an anonymous mass but as a collection of individuals.

A gentleman once shared his worst speaking experience: right before the start of his speech, he reached the front of the room and forgot everything he was supposed to say. When asked what he saw when he was in the front of the room, he gave a quizzical look and responded, “I didn’t see anything. All I remember is a mental image of me up there in the front of the room blowing it.” Speaking anxiety becomes more intense if you focus on yourself rather than concentrate on your audience and your material.

Keeping a Sense of Humour

No matter how well we plan, unexpected things happen. That fact is what makes the public speaking situation so interesting. When the unexpected happens to you, do not let it rattle you. At the end of a class period late in the afternoon of a long day, a student raised her hand and asked the professor if he knew that he was wearing two different-coloured shoes, one black and one blue. He looked down and saw that she was right; his shoes did not match. He laughed at himself, complimented the student on her observational abilities, and moved on with the important thing, the material he had to deliver. People who can laugh at themselves often endear themselves to their audience.

Stress Management Techniques

Even when we use positive thinking and are well prepared, some of us still feel a great deal of anxiety about public speaking. When that is the case, it can be more helpful to use stress management than to try to make the anxiety go away.

Here are two main tools that can help:

- **Visualization:** Imagine the details of what a successful speech would look and sound like from beginning to end; a way of hypnotizing yourself into positive thinking by using your mind’s eye to make

success real.

- **Systematic desensitization:** Gradual exposure to the thing that causes fear—in this case, giving a speech—can ultimately lead to decreased anxiety. Basically, the more practice you get speaking in front of people, the less fear and anxiety you’ll have about public speaking. Organizations like Toastmasters, that help people confront their fears by providing a supportive environment to learn and practice, are a good option if you have a true phobia around presenting or public speaking.

Using a Microphone

Conditions such as the size of the room and how far away your audience will be sitting should determine whether or not you need a microphone. Many people make the mistake of thinking they don’t need a mic because they can talk loud enough for everyone to hear. They are usually wrong. Unless the crowd is very small, it benefits you to use a microphone. It is very frustrating for people to be watching a presentation that they can’t hear.

If you are using a microphone during your speech, there are a few cautions to be aware of. First, make sure you do a sound check and that you know how the microphone works—how to turn it on and off, how to mute it, and how to raise or lower it. If possible, have it positioned to the height you need before you go onstage. Make sure the microphone does not block your face.

Make sure to find the optimum distance from the microphone to your mouth. This will vary with different sound equipment. For some, the mic needs to be right up against the mouth to get good sound quality. For others, this will cause screeching feedback or will pick up your breathing noises. If you will be using a clip-on microphone (called a lavalier, or lav., mic), you’ll need to wear something with a lapel or collar that it can be clipped to. Make sure your hair and jewelry are out of the way to avoid rustling noises, and place the lavalier microphone 8 to 10 inches below your chin.

If the microphone is on a stand, make sure it is set to the appropriate height. If it is set too high, it is distracting to the audience and if it’s too short, it will cause you to hunch over it, creating bad posture and an uncomfortable position. Often you can take the mic off the stand and use it as a handheld model, which allows you to move around a little more. Doing a sound check and getting comfortable with the equipment before you go onstage will prevent the majority of errors when using a microphone.

Coping with Mistakes and Surprises

Even the most prepared speaker will encounter unexpected challenges from time to time. Here are a few strategies for combating the unexpected in your own presentations.

Speech Content Issues

What if a note card goes missing or you skip important information from the beginning of your speech? While situations like these might seem like the worst nightmare of a novice public speaker, they can be overcome easily. Pause for a moment to think about what to do. Is it important to include the missing information, or can it be omitted without hindering the audience's ability to understand your speech? If it needs to be included, does the information fit better now or in a later segment? If you can move on without the missing element, that is often the best choice, but pausing for a few seconds to decide will be less distracting to the audience than sputtering through a few “ums” and “uhs.” Situations like these demonstrate why it's a good idea to have a glass of water with you when you speak. Pausing for a moment to take a sip of water is a perfectly natural movement, so the audience may not even notice that anything is amiss.

Technical Difficulties

Technology has become a very useful aid in public speaking, allowing us to use audio or video clips, presentation software, or direct links to websites. But it does break down occasionally! Web servers go offline, files will not download, or media contents are incompatible with the computer in the presentation room. Always have a **backup plan** in case of **technical difficulties**. As you develop your speech and visual aids, think through what you will do if you cannot show a particular graph or if your presentation slides are garbled. Your beautifully prepared chart may be superior to the verbal description you can provide; however, your ability to provide a succinct verbal description when technology fails will give your audience the information they need and keep your speech moving forward.

External Distractions

Unfortunately, one thing that you can't control during your speech is **audience etiquette**, but you *can* decide how to react to it. Inevitably, an audience member will walk in late, a cell phone will ring, or a car alarm will go off outside. If you are interrupted by external events like these, it is often useful and sometimes necessary to pause and wait so that you can regain the audience's attention.

Whatever the event, maintain your **composure**. Do not get upset or angry about these **glitches**. If you keep your cool and quickly implement a “plan B” for moving forward, your audience will be impressed.

Reading Your Audience

Recognizing your audience's mood by observing their body language can help you adjust your message and see who agrees with you, who doesn't, and who is still deciding. With this information, you can direct your attention—including eye contact and questions—to the areas of the room where they can have the most impact.

As the speaker, you are conscious that you are being observed. But your audience members probably don't think of themselves as being observed, so their body language will be easy to read.

Questions and Discussion

As a presenter, it's a good idea to allow a little time at the end of your presentation to invite questions from the audience and to facilitate a little discussion about the topic. If possible and applicable you can include a bit of interactivity with the audience during the presentation. This goes a long way to getting the audience engaged and interested in the topic.

There are three important elements to think about when incorporating Q&A's as part of your presentation:

Audience Expectations

At the beginning of your speech, give the audience a little bit of information about who you are and what your expertise on the subject is. Once they know what you do (and what you know), it will be easier for the audience to align their questions with your area of expertise—and for you to bow out of answering questions that are outside of your area.

Timing of Q&A's

Questions are easier to manage when you are expecting them. Unless you are part of a panel, meeting, or teleconference, it is probably easier to let the audience know that you will take questions at the end of your presentation. This way you can avoid interruptions to your speech that can distract you and cause you to lose time. If audience members interrupt during your talk, you can then ask them politely to hold on to their question until the Q&A session at the end.

Knowing How to Respond

Never pretend that you know the answer to a question if you don't. The audience will pick up on it! Instead, calmly apologize and say that the question is outside of the scope of your knowledge but that you'd be happy to find out after the presentation (or, suggest some resources where the person could find out for themselves).

If you are uncertain about how to answer a question, say something like "That's really interesting. Could you elaborate on that?" This will make the audience member feel good because they have asked an interesting question, and it will give you a moment to comprehend what they are asking.

Sometimes presenters rush to answer a question because they are nervous or want to impress. Pause for a moment, before you begin your answer, to think about what you want to say. This will help you to avoid **misinterpreting** the question, or taking **offense** to a question that is not intended that way.

A final tip is to be cautious about how you answer, so that you don't offend your audience. You are presenting on a topic because you are knowledgeable about it, but your audience is not. It is important not to make the audience feel inferior because there are things that they don't know. Avoid comments such as "Oh, yes, it's really easy to do that..." Instead, say something like "Yes, that can be tricky. I would recommend..." Also, avoid a bossy tone. For example, phrase your response with "What I find helpful is..." rather than "What you should do is..."

Critiquing a Presentation

Self-Analysis

It is often said that we are our own worst critic. Many people are hard on themselves and may exaggerate how poorly a speech or presentation went. Other times, there's not much exaggeration. In both cases it helps to examine your performance as presenter after the presentation.

You may want to ask yourself:

- Did you make the most of your unique voice? Did the audience seem to understand you?
- Did you make the most of using body language? Did your body confidently support what you were saying?
- Did you use a coherent structure? Did the audience seem to make sense of your presentation? Was it logical?
- Did you show enthusiasm? Did you show the audience you cared about your presentation?
- Did you demonstrate expertise? Did you show your credibility by citing reliable sources and making a distinction between facts and your opinion?
- Did you show that you practised and prepared? Did your confidence show because you implemented a plan that included sufficient rehearsal, contingency plans, and other success strategies?

Honestly asking yourself these questions with the intention of uncovering your strengths and weaknesses should help you to become a better presenter. While it is important to review other kinds of feedback, whether from the audience, your peers, or an instructor, it is also useful to have a realistic understanding of your own performance. This understanding is part of gaining experience and improving as a presenter.

Feedback from Others

As well as doing some self-analysis, it is a good idea to get feedback from others. If your presentation was for your class, you will likely get feedback from your instructor who is marking you. You may also get some feedback from classmates. It would also be wise to ask someone that you trust, who was in the audience, to

give you feedback. You can learn a lot from what others tell you. They may have noticed a distracting habit such as twirling your hair, or putting your hands in your pockets, or a lot of ummms. They may also have noticed some real strengths of your presentation that you may not have considered. Whether the comments are positive or constructive criticism, they can be helpful for focusing on, in your next presentation.

Receiving Feedback

Being open to receiving feedback is the only way to have a better picture of your performance as a presenter or speaker. Combining self-analysis with the feedback of your audience or peers is your opportunity to better understand your strengths as a presenter and what resonated well with your audience.

When receiving and making sense of feedback, it is very important to be self-aware and honest with yourself. This honesty will help you distinguish between an environmental situation, a situation that lies with the audience member, or a situation with the presenter.

Summary

In this section you learned about useful tools, such as rehearsing, dressing appropriately, and having a contingency plan, that helps you prepare to present to a live audience. You examined approaches that would be useful during the presentation itself, such as keeping a good sense of humour and focusing your attention on your audience to manage anxiety, and what steps to take for a critical review afterwards to close the feedback loop.

Check Your Understanding: Presentation Delivery

1. Why should you dress appropriately for the occasion at which you are speaking?

- a. To give the audience confidence in your abilities
 - b. To show that you are easy-going and approachable
 - c. To play up your physical attractiveness
 - d. All of the above
2. While managing a Q&A session following his presentation, Eric finds himself unable to answer a question posed by one of the audience members. Which of the following tactics should Eric take to maintain control of the session?
 - a. Improvise and make up an answer
 - b. Commit to provide a more thorough answer at a later time
 - c. Spend significant time on the question before responding
 - d. Become hostile and defensive
3. Starting a presentation with a joke is a good technique for any presentation and presenter.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. Making mistakes in a presentation mean that the presenter “blew it.”
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. The natural state of the audience is empathy, not antipathy. They generally want the presenter to succeed.
 - a. True
 - b. False
6. If you write out your presentation word for word and memorize it, you’re golden.
 - a. True
 - b. False
7. The audience will always be able to tell when the presenter is nervous.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Attribution & References

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PRESENTATION AIDS

Presentations can be enhanced by the effective use of visual aids. These include handouts, drawings on the whiteboard, PowerPoint slides, memes, short video clips, and many other types of props. Once you have chosen a topic, consider how you are going to show your audience what you are talking about. Visuals can provide a reference, illustration, or image to help the audience to understand and remember your point.

Visual aids accomplish several goals:

- Make your speech more interesting
- Enhance your credibility as a speaker
- Guide transitions, helping the audience stay on track
- Communicate complex information in a short time
- Reinforce your message
- Encourage retention

Emphasis, Support, and Clarity

The purpose for each visual aid should be clear and speak for itself. If you can't quickly link the purpose of a visual aid to the verbal message, consider whether it should be used. Visual aids can be distracting or confusing if they are not clearly connected to what you are saying.

Perhaps you want to highlight a trend between two related issues, such as socioeconomic status and educational attainment. You might show a line graph that compares the two, showing that as socioeconomic status rises, educational attainment also rises. People learn in different ways. Some of us learn best using visual stimuli; others learn by taking notes or by using tactile objects. So, by using visuals to support your presentation and, if possible, tactile aids or demos, you can help a more significant proportion of the audience learn about your topic.

Clarity is key in the use of visual aids. Limit the number of words on your slides. Some people even state their rule of thumb is no more than 10 words per slide, with a font large enough to be read at the back of the room or auditorium. Generally, you should include no more than five to seven lines of text per slide. People often make the mistake of trying to cram too much information on a slide, which causes the audience to zone out. Test that your slides are readable in the environment you will be using.

Methods and Materials

Slide Decks

The most common visual aid used in presentations, **slide decks**, may be developed using software such as PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, or Google Slides. These tools allow you to show text, images, and charts and even to play audio or video files. They are an excellent enhancement to your presentation, but they do sometimes encounter a glitch. Computers sometimes fail to work as planned, so make sure you have a whiteboard or handout as a backup in case of any technical issues. Minimize the risk by testing out equipment ahead of time.

Also, remember that these are an *aid* to your central, verbal message. Resist the urge to read directly from them with your back to the audience, or to pack slides full of text in lieu of speaking all of the information you want to get across.

Flip Charts, Whiteboards, and Large Prints

Flip charts and whiteboards are a good choice when you don't have access to a computer and projector. Alternatively, you can print some visual aids like charts and graphs in large sizes and show them during your presentation. If you plan to get a lot of audience input and want to write or draw things out, then a whiteboard is an ideal choice. But make sure your writing is large enough to be seen at the back of the room and that it is easy to read.

Handouts

If it will be helpful for your audience to refer to the information you're sharing at a later date, they'll appreciate it if you leave them with a handout. Decide whether it is better to give handouts to the audience at the beginning or end of your speech. If your handout is comprehensive and they have detailed notes in front of them, they can be distracted by reading and tune you out, so it's better to wait until the end to distribute them. Let the audience know at the beginning of the speech that you'll provide it at the end. This will relieve them from having to capture all your content by taking notes, and keep their attention focused on you while you speak. If your handouts are the presentation slides with just the main points, it may be better to hand them out at the beginning so that your audience can use them to add in additional points.

Demonstrations and Tactile Aids

If your presentation is about how to do something, for example, how to cook a particular dish or how to use a tool, you will want to show the audience a demonstration. Sometimes it is helpful to pass around a tactile aid, for example, a model. These can be very helpful if you want your audience to learn by doing. Make sure to pass items around during pauses in your presentation so that you don't lose the audience's attention. If audience members need to move around to use a tactile aid, make sure the location has enough space to make this possible.



Visual aids capture interest and demonstrate concepts. **Source:** “[Using Visuals](#)” by Marnie Landon is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

Using Visual Aids

Designing Slide Decks

Using PowerPoint or a similar program, you'll be able to import, or cut and paste, words from text files, images, or video clips to represent your ideas. You can even incorporate web links.

At first, you might be overwhelmed by the possibilities, and you might be tempted to use all the bells, whistles, and sounds, not to mention the flying and animated graphics. If used wisely, a simple transition can be effective, but if used indiscriminately, it can annoy the audience to the point where they cringe in anticipation of, for example, the sound effect at the start of each slide.

Stick to one main idea per slide. The presentation is for the audience's benefit, not yours. Pictures and images can be understood more quickly and easily than text, so you can use this to your advantage as you present.

If you develop a slide deck for your presentation, test these out in the location beforehand, not just on your own computer screen, as different computers and software versions can make your slides look different than you expected. Allow time for revision based on what you learn.

Your visual aids should meet the following criteria:

- **Big**—Make it legible for everyone, even the back row.
- **Clear**—The audience should “get it” the first time they see it.
- **Simple**—Simplify concepts rather than complicating them.
- **Consistent**—Use the same visual style throughout.

Font

Another consideration that you'll need to make when designing your slide decks is font. As previously mentioned, think about the people at the back of the room when choosing the size of your text, to make sure it can be read by everyone.

A common mistake that presenters make is to use decorative fonts, or to incorporate many different fonts in their slides. This not only creates a mixed message for the audience but also makes your message difficult to read. Choose legible, common fonts that do not have thin elements that may be difficult to see.

Colour

When considering your choice of colours to use, legibility must be your priority. Contrast can help the audience read your key terms more easily. Make sure the background colour and the images you plan to use complement each other. Repeat colours, from your graphics to your text, to help unify each slide. To reduce visual noise, try not to use more than two or three colours.

Blue-green colour blindness, and red-green colour blindness are fairly common, so avoid using these colour combinations if it is important for the audience to differentiate between them. If you are using a pie chart, for example, avoid putting a blue segment next to a green one. Use labelling, so that even if someone is colour blind, they will be able to tell the relative sizes of the pie segments and what they signify.

Helpful Hints

Visual aids can be a powerful tool when used effectively but can run the risk of dominating your presentation. Consider your audience and how the portrayal of images, text, graphic, animated sequences, or sound files will contribute or detract from your presentation. Here are some hints to keep in mind as you prepare yours:

- Keep it simple.
- Use one idea per slide.
- Avoid clutter.
- Use large, bold fonts that can be read from at least 20 feet away.
- Use colours that work well together.
- Avoid using clip art. It can look hokey.
- Proofread each slide with care.
- Test in the presentation room beforehand.
- If you are using a computer and/or projector for your visual aids, test it beforehand. Have a hard copy of your presentation in case the computer has technical difficulties.
- Mark the floor with tape beforehand to mark the best spot to have the projector once you've tested it.

Check Your Understanding: Presentation Aids

1. Which of the following presentations would be more effective with the use of a physical or animate object?
 1. A slide presentation on a new employment policy
 2. A slide presentation on the different features of a mountain bike
 3. A personal finance workshop on real estate investing tips
 4. A lecture on the psychological effects of pharmaceutical drugs
2. All of the following should be practiced for designing an effective slide presentation, except:
 1. Limiting text to one or two fonts
 2. Bolding, italicizing, and capitalizing important information
 3. Presenting no more than five to seven lines of text per slide
 4. Using a font colour that blends in well with the background
3. If a presenter is using slides in a well-lit room, which of the following colour schemes should be used on the slides to maximize legibility?
 1. A dark background with light text and visuals
 2. A dark background with dark text and visuals
 3. A light background with dark text and visuals
 4. A light background with light text and visuals

Summary

Using visual aids takes time and practice. The more you practice before your speech, the more

comfortable you will be with your visual aids and the role they serve. Know your material well enough that you refer to your visual aids, not rely on them.

Attribution & References

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